

SELF-DELUSION ;

OR,

ADELAIDE D'HAUTEROCHE :

A Tale.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "DOMESTIC SCENES."

— *One-te voghe, in . . . foco accese ,
E lungo error' in cieco laberinto.*

PETRARCH.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON :

PRINTED FOR

LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1823.

SELF-DELUSION

OR,

ADELAIDE D'HAUTEROC

CHAPTER I.

ADELAIDE'S fever, although of a somewhat less dangerous nature than the ignoramus first called in, had pronounced it to be, was still gaining such ground as to justify a considerable alarm, before Sir Arthur's friend, who lived at a distance of between thirty and forty miles, could arrive: — he having also been unfortunately absent when the express reached his dwelling, and detained by the

SELF-DELUSION ; OR,

a patient's case till the following
The summons to Samford Lodge
however, obeyed the moment he
it ; and great indeed was the
sir Arthur experienced when,
spot in the shubbery, command-
retch of the road, on which he had
nearly stationary from the first hour
which the Doctor could, according to
most accurate computation, possibly
ve been expected, — he finally beheld
e smoaking horses, which gave token
of his approach.

Without allowing him time to breathe
or ask a question, he hurried him to the
sick chamber ; at the door of which he
took his post in trembling suspense for
the result.

“ A slight attack of scarlet fever,”
said Doctor Cosby, when he rejoined
him, “ not quite so trifling as what we
have of late denominated *scarlatine* ; but
not of sufficient violence to warrant great
alarm. I have no doubt of being able to
bring it down.”

"You are not deceiving me, Doctor?"

"Why the devil should I, my good friend? A guardian is not in general so desperately parental as to require such delicate treatment; — though, faith," laughing as he spoke, "now I think ou't — had you been young and single I should have given you credit for more than father-like interest in this lovely girl, when it bewildered you enough to enclose *me* a letter intended for Lady Delmaine. Hey! what the plague have I done with it?" rummaging his pockets one after another, "I hope I have not left it behind."

The agony produced by this discovery was truly pitiable. Hitherto Sir Arthur had flattered himself that nothing had occurred to excite the slightest suspicion in his wife's confiding mind of the state of his heart. Alienated as *that* was,* — *her* peace was an object of the utmost importance to him; and in the delusive calculations of passion, he trusted to being

always able to confine his miseries to his own breast. By this unfortunate mistake she must be, at all events, experiencing anxiety for his safety, which, upon every former occasion, he had studiously spared her, — and this was in itself vexatious enough ; but could he hope *that* would be all ? The Doctor's unlucky joke helped to disconcert him, and a confused consciousness of betraying circumstances rose to his mind, and portrayed themselves in his countenance, so as to strike the Doctor with a nameless something he could not very well comprehend.

The letter was found, and presented to its writer with rather a scrutinizing look, and received in silence, save only a half uttered ejaculation of astonishment.

“ Why, my dear Sir Arthur, you put a graver face upon this matter than there can be occasion for. Knowing Lady Delmaine as I do, I will venture to assert, that your omission will be as readily forgiven as—”

“ But I cannot so easily forgive myself for giving her pain,” he interrupted ; “ and I have but one way of atoning for it ; that is, by immediately ordering my carriage, and returning home with this justification in my hand.”

“ Well ! you best know the *quantum sufficit* of submission called for by such matrimonial delinquency. We forlorn old bachelors, — Lord help our lamentable ignorance !” and in saying this he humourously wrapped his arms round him with a satisfied shrug of different import from what his words expressed ; “ we cannot be judges in such nice points ; but surely you would not take away Miss Delmaine from this poor lass, to whom good nursing is of full as much consequence as good prescriptions ; — though, egad, I had like to have begun by turning her out myself, till I recollected having attended her in the fellow fever to this.”

Sir Arthur assured his friend he had no intention of taking Julia with him.

“ Still, my good Sir, allow me to suggest, that it is worth a second consideration before you take yourself away from protecting two such fine girls, and leave them under the care of this cursed *flighty* devil, to call her no worse ; — and faith, how you could ever bring them hither at all is somewhat surprising to me !”

Sir Arthur was well aware that he had been actuated by feelings that precluded mature deliberation, when he compelled his ward to accept Lady Samford’s invitation ; so unlike his habitual caution in regard to the companions he suffered his girls to associate with. He blamed himself for laying more stress on the general’s testimony to his niece’s merits than in any other case he would have done, for unfavourable rumours of her conduct during Lord Samford’s life-time, had certainly been afloat in the country, though little attended to by him. This conscious-

ness produced a hesitating and lame defence, which again excited the surprise of his hearer.

“ All that I have further to say then is this,” resumed the friendly old man, “ that if *you* desert your charge, *I* will stay with her till to-morrow, when I shall be able to judge more decisively ; and if, as I hope, things promise well, you may look sharp about you, that on my return some days hence, — for I shall not let many pass by before I ascertain how she goes on, — I do not run away with both these young ones into better air and better keeping : — hey ! what ? you know my jewel of a sister ! ”

This was indeed a suggestion that struck full upon Sir Arthur's heart, and filled his eyes to overflowing. He had seen enough of Lady Samford in this visit to make him eager for the earliest possible removal of Adelaide and Julia from under her roof ; but the danger of infection to Charlotte forbade the thought

of bringing them home at a very recent period of recovery. This difficulty had been painfully revolved in his late miserable musings, and rapturously seizing both the Doctor's hands, "God in Heaven bless you for that thought, my best of friends!" he fervently exclaimed; "it relieves me more than I can express. Know your sister! I know she has not her fellow for excellence of every kind!"

"Aye, aye, — I don't feel it incumbent on me to gainsay you because of her being my sister. She is to me 'the pearl of great price,' — egad! and affords me all the delight of domesticity without the thralldom of matrimony; though I know a word against that blessed yoke is high treason in your ears: but where, my friend, is such another specimen of connubial felicity to be met with as you and Lady Delmaine offer? — hey! in all my railings against the state I ever except you; but the exception only substantiates the charge, you know."

He "spoke daggers." In visible embarrassment Sir Arthur attempted an answer, but it did not find utterance; and the loquacious Doctor proceeded: "Nay, you need not look so confoundedly modest about the matter; I am not ascribing any extraordinary merit to you; for, upon my soul, the man must be little short of a monster that could have ceased to adore a wife so devoted as Lady Delmaine. — What!"

Sir Arthur absolutely writhed beneath this unintended infliction.

"And though I joked about matrimonial submission, in sober truth, your flying from the remotest distance to save her the shadow of an anxiety, would be no more than her just due."

Just as he was luckily interrupted, and the conscious culprit saved from further perplexity, by a civil message from Lady Samford to Dr. Cosby, delivered in French by François, inviting him to stay dinner.

“The devil take me if I do!” ejaculated the Doctor.

Sir Arthur, much relieved by the entrance of François, said, with something approaching to a smile, “You do not mean your answer to be repeated exactly in those words, I presume!”

“What words?”

Sir Arthur repeated what he had said.

“Did I, by G—,” laughing heartily; “this famous trick of mine, of thinking aloud, will get me into a rare scrape some day or other. Gadzooks, I hope the fellow don’t understand English.”

The fellow did not, —luckily for the credit of the Doctor’s manners. So a civiler excuse was made, intimating at the same time his intention of returning for that night, with her Ladyship’s leave, to watch by the patient’s bedside, foreseeing that it might prove critical. “And, faith! it goes something against the grain to ask even this piece of hospitality at such hands. What! if you knew her as well as I do, you would not wonder.”

Startled by the suggestion of how critical the night might prove, Sir Arthur did not attend to this last remark, being for a moment tempted to forego his purpose of immediate return home; but the infinitely potent motive of tranquillizing any suspicions that might have arisen in his wife's mind again predominated, and he abruptly broke into his friend's speech with the proposal of leaving Matthew to follow at an early hour the next morning with the important intelligence.

“Aye, there now! that's so like yourself! always putting your wife before every other consideration. Show me another husband who will do the same, and I'll no longer quote you as such a *rara avis*; but we medical men get devilishly behind the scenes;—though, faith, I must confess this artful jade here had as true and worthy a yoke-fellow, too, as ever trod on neat's leather; he might have vied with you if she had let him; but it was her cursed aim to break his heart, and she

has succeeded, at last, confound her for a—.”

Here the Doctor's wrath led him into a strength of epithet beyond what we like to repeat ; and moreover, his honest indignation carried him a little beyond the exact truth in his assertion. Lord Samford's death was by no means the wish or aim of his amiable consort. On the contrary, she had, in the first paroxysm of her grief, expressed herself in writing to an intimate friend, in these pathetic terms : “ Words cannot paint my feelings for the loss of so indulgent and confiding a husband, who was no more restraint upon any occasion than my lap-dog. I shall miss him every hour of my life.” Her philosophic admirer and consoler, the Baron, had however taken pains to remove this cause of regret, by emancipating her too-susceptible mind from the thralldom of regard to the world's opinion, and had so far succeeded in enlarging and liberalising her views, as imperceptibly to lead her into her pre-

sent transgression of all *décorum*. Not that she had yet absolutely renounced her earlier prejudice in favour of appearances, since she had sought in some degree to screen herself from censure under the respectability of the Delmaines; she had also laboured hard to impress Sir Arthur with a favourable opinion of her scientific associate, which was as speedily obliterated by the gentleman's own inordinate self-conceit. Indeed, less of penetration than Sir Arthur possessed would have sufficed to show him how grievously his precipitation had misled him in this affair, not only with regard to Adelaide at first, but in having now engaged Julia in so strange an intimacy, and so unpleasant a situation. Well might the Doctor's unexpectedly kind proposal therefore bring grateful tears into his eyes; it was the first pleasurable sensation he had experienced for many a day. Lady Samford's dread of a fever gave a fortunate check to all particular intercourse with her young guests, and

left Julia at liberty to devote herself to her friend, without other molestation than the frequent recurrence of civil messages, for of these her Ladyship was not sparing.

“ And so, you are actually meaning to go without your dinner, my good friend,” resumed Sir Arthur, “ in preference to sharing it with such companions as you hold these to be ?”

“ Why, faith! luckily my virtue is not quite put to that test. A valetudinarian friend of Jane’s lives but a few miles onwards, whom she would be disappointed were I to omit seeing, and I would no more fail my excellent sister, let me tell you, than you would your incomparable lady.”

This perseverance in “ praise undeserved” almost amounted to persecution ; and thankful was Sir Arthur to be released from it by seeing his carriage come to the door.

He went to the apartment of the in-

valid to learn the latest report, and bid his daughter goodbye. He refrained for a moment from knocking, on hearing them talk. Julia was persuading Adelaide to take her medicine.

“ I will take it Julia, if *he* desires it — I should though it were poison ; — but you know as well as I, it *can* do me no good.” The sharp shrill tone of voice, so indicative of fever while the paroxysm lasts, struck painfully on Sir Arthur’s ear.

“ Why should you think so Adelaide ? ”

“ Because it can signify nothing what is poured down the throat, when the sickness is in the heart. — Oh ! ” — with a deep drawn sigh, “ there is where I feel such a sad, sad load ! ”

“ That sensation is caused by your disorder.”

“ No, no, Julia — you mistake for effect, what is cause — but I know better — O, I would soon be well if they would let me prescribe for myself — one sight of my guardian should be enough.”

Sir Arthur, agitated beyond endurance, could scarce refrain from making the experiment, but was stopped by what followed.

“I would soon be transformed into the ‘dove that should fly’ — not *away*, but to his *heart*, ‘and be at rest,’ ” — and she began singing some bars of that beautiful anthem* of Kent’s, which she had lately happened to hear, and been much struck with. This distressing evidence of delirium was too much, and drew forth an involuntary groan from the listener which caught the attention of his daughter, though not of the patient, who was now again sinking into the dozing state, which alternated with the delirium whenever the fever subsided.

Julia soon came to her father, and pacified him with the assurance that the symptoms were by no means encreasing. Having made her promise to retire to rest

* “Hear my prayer.”

herself whenever Dr. Cosby should return, they parted, and with a bleeding heart he flung himself into his chaise. — Lady Samford being engaged in her laboratory, where she was never to be disturbed, saved him from the constraint of a personal interview with her, and a civil message concluded the matter in that quarter.

He had proceeded pretty far on his journey homewards, — sunk back in the carriage absorbed in deeply distressing thoughts, among which the dread of what his ward might betray to Dr. Cosby in her wanderings, had now found its place, — when the post-boy suddenly stopped, saying, “Them there as just passed us, called after us, and be stopping; to my thinking, it’s some one as knows your honour.” Not having observed the chaise, and unwilling to be delayed, he was about to bid the lad drive on, when he added, “The gemmen be getting out and coming this-a-way,”

and, in an instant Augustus Stanmore stood before him.

“Astonishment! Augustus! welcome my dear boy! but whence come you?” and he opened his arms to receive his embrace.

“Hold, Sir!” with a haughty air and a repulsive motion of the hand, “spare those deceptious testimonies by which I have been too long blinded! — I come to seek explanation and satisfaction!”

“What, in the name of Heaven, is all this, Augustus? — what may it mean?”

“It means that a time at length comes, when a poor gulled boy rises into man, and sees through the artful duplicity that——”

“For mercy’s sake, come into the carriage,” Sir Arthur broke in, “and don’t stand raving there! — exposing yourself and me to auditors like these!” for the two post-boys stood staring in stupid wonder at what they could in no way understand.

“Come into the carriage! no, Sir! I expect you to come out of it, and walk with me to where we may be both out of hearing and out of sight.”

“Away, unadvised boy! — if you persist in this wrongheadedness, you will compel me to treat you like the maniac you look, and make these lads take you neck and heels and force you into the chaise, where I will give you any explanation you require.”

Augustus just came sufficiently to his senses, to determine upon getting into the chaise without further opposition; satisfying himself that there were means of forcing what he sought, which left no choice but fighting, to any man who had a spark of honour remaining. — So, upon the strength of this happy resource, into the chaise he got, ordering his own to follow.

“And now, in God’s name, let me understand what incomprehensible mistake

has driven you into this fit of phrenzy? What is the explanation you want?"

"I want an acknowledgment of the insidious arts by which you have sought to entangle the affections of Mademoiselle d'Hauteroche from the first moment of her deluded grandmother's placing her in your power, whilst you were blinding me and others by affecting to promote my honourable views. Thus at the same time destroying my peace, injuring the reputation of your ward, and breaking the heart of your unhappy wife."

"Your words are pretty strong, young man! Though I can hardly think Lady Delmaine has dubbed you her champion." Sir Arthur made an effort to suppress the choler that he felt rising at this last accusation.

"Lady Delmaine is incapable of exposing her husband's immorality. It is her mild enduring woe-worn countenance alone that speaks her wrongs. But it is an appeal that must enlist every

man in her cause who is not lost to all sense of right feeling."

"You have seen my wife, then?"

"I arrived at Hawkwood Manor yesterday."

"And will you be pleased to inform me whether your judicious zeal for Lady Delmaine's happiness went the length of imparting to her that you were setting forth with the intention of seeking her husband's life?"

"Sir Arthur, you are attempting to turn the tables upon me by questioning, instead of explaining, as you engaged to do; but no evasions shall serve your turn. Satisfaction, entire and compleat, I am determined to have. In justice to Lady Delmaine, however, I will answer your questions:—Not one syllable passed between us on the subject, — and such is my respect and devoted attachment to her, that sooner than give her one moment's pain, I would undergo any misery whatever."

“ *There* is the only sentiment in which I have recognised Augustus Stanmore, in this ill-omened meeting !” Augustus felt an involuntary softening about his heart at this observation. Sir Arthur went on. “ One more question I must put, and then I will fully convince you that I do not mean to shrink from the explanation I have undertaken to give you. Tell me on what your accusations are grounded ?”

“ On the most irrefragable proofs. On your studious concealment from me, of Adelaide’s devotedness to you being such, as to induce her to risk her own life to save yours, — on the removal of her from under Lady Delmaine’s protection, to place her where no impediment would be thrown in the way of your meetings, — on your unaccounted-for prolonged absence from home, — on the evident misery Lady Delmaine is enduring, — and many more concurring and corroborating circumstances, forming al-

together, such a mass of evidence as leaves but one conclusion to be drawn from the whole."

"I will spare you the summing of it up, till you have heard what I have to say," interrupted Sir Arthur, who had now recovered his own calmness, and perceived that his accuser was again working himself into an increase of wrath, (the greater perhaps from becoming conscious, as he went on, of the futility of his charges,) which might lead to language the guardian could not have submitted to let pass. "I must now challenge your recollection, Augustus, whether in the long course of my guardianship I have ever, — except as you are inclined to think in regard to Adelaide, — shown myself less to you than an affectionate father?"

"I should be ungrateful not to acknowledge that, certainly ; but in failing where the happiness of my whole life is at stake, that debt becomes cancelled."

“ Augustus ! I will lay my hand upon my heart and say, no father can love a son better than I have done you ; and I am giving strong proof how much I do so still, by treating you as an erring son on this trying occasion. Do you think there is another man upon earth from whom I would have borne one half of what I have done from you to-day ? ”

“ You are treating me like a wayward child, Sir, and working upon my feelings ; but I shall not be so put by. ”

“ You shall find presently whether you are doing me justice in this respect either. What bitter revenge should I have taken of you, Augustus, had I given way to the temper you sought to work me up to ? In robbing me of a life which in my present state of mind would have fallen an easy sacrifice, you would only have relieved *me* from a load of woe I am ill able to bear ; but you would have entailed upon *yourself* a lasting remorse which no time could have alleviated,

when you came to discover, as you soon must, how misjudging you had been."

Augustus began to doubt he might have been something rash.

"I assert this from my intimate knowledge of that noble nature which has so endeared you to me; for from your childhood upwards, never has your impetuous disposition hurried you into error, that you did not show yourself unhappy, till it was acknowledged and forgiven: but *here* you could never have forgiven *yourself*."

Augustus was fast softening into almost feminine weakness, and listened with breathless eagerness for what was to follow.

"And to this nobleness of nature I am now going to commit myself in a most unprecedented manner, by confessing to you that it is but too fatally true, that Adelaide has cherished an affection for me, which can be productive of nothing but excess of misery to both."

Augustus gave a violent start, and all his suspicions recurred in full force, accompanied with the instantaneous apprehension that his guardian had hoped, through his feelings, to continue to deceive him.

Sir Arthur, aware of the start as well as of what was passing in his mind, went, however, deliberately on : — “ But an affection, as pure as it is enthusiastic, and founded in her implicit, though delusive belief in the system of Platonism.”

A bitter smile sat on the features of Augustus ; but he did not speak.

“ Of this affection, however, I solemnly declare I had no suspicion whatever, when I urged your suit to her, nor for a length of time afterwards : — nay, spare that incredulous shake of the head you will soon be satisfied I am withholding nothing from you. — Her eager defence of Platonism upon all occasions, joined to the openness with which her perfect innocence of thought led her

to evince her devoted attachment, by degrees made me sensible that she was exposing herself to the misconstruction of an uncharitable world, which refuses to believe in purity of which it feels itself incapable."

"That consciousness ought instantly to have produced the determination of removing her to a less exceptionable asylum!" impetuously interrupted Augustus.

"And where was it to be found for an unconnected, unprotected, foreign heiress?—expressly enjoined moreover by her grandmother's will, to remain under my roof till she should be of age!—Possibly I might too easily give way to the difficulty, from being already, though unknown to myself, actuated by the passion which has since acquired such dreadful power over me:—but even now, I do not see what I could have done, except banishing *myself* from *England* during the remaining period of my guardian-

ship ; and that, considering my ties here, was a stronger measure than I persuaded myself there was a call for. Weakly I may have acted ; but dishonourably you will find I have not."

Augustus was silent.

"I seized every opportunity of showing my disapprobation of the visionary system which had taken such hold on her mind, and pointing out the censure its votaries were obnoxious to : — not, I will confess, with any apparent effect ; and, perhaps, only succeeding in blinding myself to the magnitude of the impending mischief. For not until that fatally critical moment, when to save my life she risked her own, did I become sensible of my unwarrantable hopeless passion : — and from that hour have I been the veriest wretch alive ! — torn by conflicting sensations — the dread of causing unhappiness to the best of wives, should she ever suspect the alienation of my wayward heart — the fear of injuring Ade-

laide in the eye of the world, should any unforeseen, unhappy casualty bring to light the feelings that are preying on my vitals—the soul-harrowing consciousness of the misery I am causing to the object for whom I would lay down my life, by the distance and reserve of my conduct to her, from the day on which my eyes were opened to myself — misery by which she is at this very hour brought nearly to the verge of the grave — ”

“ How say you ? her life in danger ! — Merciful Heaven ! — little did I imagine ! — You talk of passion, and you have *left* her in that doubtful state ? ” —

“ For the more *imperious duty* of relieving the anxiety I have involuntarily occasioned my wife : — at what price I am doing so, is known only to myself.”

“ O my father ! my friend ! ” cried Augustus, now wholly overpowered by emotion, “ what reparation can I make for my injustice ? my unpardonable petulance ? and at such a moment to place

such generous, such unbounded confidence in me!—O'tis indeed too much!"—and he threw himself weeping on his guardian's breast, who strained him to it with unfeigned affection.

After this burst of feeling had somewhat subsided, "Suffer me now," said Augustus, "to return to my own chaise, and proceed with all speed to Samford Lodge, to supply your place for the present, by watching over the safety of this dear invalid."

"You do not suppose that I would leave her to the mercy of her eccentric hostess? Doctor Cosby and Julia are there, and Matthew is left to follow to-morrow with the bulletin." He then more particularly explained how the visit to Lady Samford had come about, and the various other confidential circumstances with which the reader has been previously made acquainted.

"And now see, my young friend, how much more than life I entrust to you! For, believe me, the weary load of *that* is

a burthen 'I should not' have stayed any hand but yours from the chance of ridding me of, exemplifying as I do in my wretched breast, the very hell so truly described by Dante*; for *hope* I can have none! and even this miserable state is aggravated by the dread responsibility of my situation, both as guardian and husband. The slightest indiscretion that should betray my disgraceful secret to Matilda, would rob me of my senses altogether: — on the other hand, so tremblingly alive am I to the fear of injuring Adelaide's fame, that the conviction of her attachment, which would be the greatest blessing to another, is but a deeper curse to me! Are you satisfied of my sincerity, Augustus?"

"O that I could lay bare my heart for your inspection, in proof of my penitence for ever having doubted!"

"Then you will, I trust, fully credit this further assertion, strange and con-

* *Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch'entrate*!

tradictory as it may seem, — that adoring her as I do with every faculty of my soul, I should feel a relief beyond what I can find words to express, if her affections could be drawn to another object.”

“Gracious Heaven !” exclaimed Augustus in unspeakable agitation, “can it indeed be? Oh, my blessed benefactor ! — my more than parent ! — what a door do you again open to my hopes ! my head turns giddy !” and, in fact, so completely was he overcome that his guardian was fain to stop the carriage at a house they were passing, and apply for a glass of water.

In the tumult of his own feelings, heightened by the unexpected appearance and strange conduct of Augustus, Sir Arthur had been hurried into this last declaration, without reflecting on the cruelty of again reviving hopes so unlikely to lead to a fortunate issue. He instantly perceived what he had done,

but saw not the remedy, particularly now that, by his own acknowledgement, he stood in the light of a rival.

“In pity to yourself and me, curb this excessive impetuosity, Augustus!” he said, when he found him a little recovered; “and recollect that her present dangerous fever does not even afford us a security of her life.”

Augustus now first seemed fully to understand the nature of her complaint and actual situation; and it caused the blood to rush back upon his heart with a sense of suffocation, which was, however, ere long, relieved by a plentiful effusion of tears that finally produced comparative calmness; and they journeyed on together in silent and deep dejection, — yet mutually endeared by their explanations.

CHAP. II.

“ **W**HERE is your lady ?” Sir Arthur asked, as he alighted from the chaise.

“ Here ! oh here ! dearest husband !” cried Lady Delmaine, rushing into his arms, from the parlour whither the distant sound of carriage wheels had drawn her in the expectation they might prove his, — and too much elated in recognising the tone of his voice, distinctly to hear the cold epithet by which he enquired for her. — Never before had it been other than “ *Where’s my wife ?*” so difficult is it to be guarded at all points when feeling no longer prompts the expression ! Augustus was painfully struck with the change, but, fortunately, it had escaped her ear. “ O welcome ! — a thousand times welcome !” she continued.

"I fear to have caused you much uneasiness, dear Matilda, by a most unpardonable piece of carelessness — Can you forgive me?"

"Name it not, name it not, dear Delmaine; all is forgotten, the moment I see you again."

He produced his letter in evidence of the explanation he had to give; but as he proceeded in it, an air of conscious embarrassment sat on his features which she affected not to perceive, and as soon as he would let her, broke into the subject by an eager inquiry after Dr. Cosby's opinion of Adelaide? expressing great satisfaction at her being under his care. Then reverting to Julia, she observed upon the good fortune of her having been secured by her early attack of the same fever, from danger in her present attendance upon her friend, and ended with regretting the ignorance of Lady Samford's improprieties which had led to countenancing this unlucky visit.

The hurry of spirits which urged her on with a volubility so unlike her naturally placid manner, had left no time for attending to the peculiarity of Augustus's having returned with Sir Arthur. At any rate, she was no ingenious self-tormentor; she did not contrive or hunt after subjects of disquietude, nor was she even quick to apprehend those that offered; though when they forced themselves at last upon her notice, they were dwelt on, perhaps the more, with undiverted and fatal effect.

Augustus, who had been an anxiously observant spectator of this scene, saw very clearly that Lady Delmaine was acting a part. Wishing to avert her suspecting that his abrupt disappearance had been with any view to his guardian, he now came forward with an apology for having run away from her, as he had found himself obliged to do, and stated

their meeting on the road as an unforeseen and lucky chance.

This little interruption gave time for Sir Arthur's eye to rest on his wife's countenance, to which, in the zeal of his vindication, he had not attended, — and deeply was he impressed with the sunk eye and pale cheek that met his gaze. "Heavens, Matilda! you have been ill, — or are ill at this moment!" he exclaimed.

Gratified by this manifestation of real alarm, and almost hoping her doubts might have outstripped the truth, she replied with warmth, "Such tones of kindness would speedily work a cure, if I were ill, dear Delmaine! — but I have no complaint."

With that querulous irritability peculiar to an accusing conscience, Sir Arthur fancied something of reproach implied in these words, and, rather testily said, "It might almost be inferred from

such a speech, that my anxiety for your health was an unwonted circumstance."

"It would be a most unjust inference as ever was drawn," she mildly answered; "and I must be very unworthy of the twenty years of unremitting attentions I have experienced from you, if I could have uttered what would bear such a construction."

Sir Arthur felt ashamed of his own captiousness, and affectionately taking her hand, said, "Forgive me, Matilda, if over-anxiety for your health makes me appear irrational"——And he now again shrunk from a sense of degrading hypocrisy in saying so much more than he actually felt:—such inconsistency is there in the movements even of an upright mind which unmastered passion has set at variance with itself. Lady Delmaine endeavoured to derive from this solicitude to blind her, a glimmering of hope that his affections were not so wholly alienated as she had apprehended.

The report brought by Matthew on the following morning was favourable. The Doctor had no fear, on leaving his patient, but that at his return, in three or four days, he should find her in a state to be removed with perfect safety into the custody of the best nurse in all England, his sister Jane; whose attention, he would take upon him to say, would be no less exerted in recovering Miss Delmaine from the effects of her meritorious, but too close, attendance upon her friend, than in restoring the interesting sufferer herself.

Great comfort arose to Lady Delmaine from this intended kindness of the Doctor's, as it settled a point of considerable distress; — being equally fearful of infection to Charlotte from the too early return of the invalid, and of exciting displeasure in Sir Arthur, by starting any difficulty of which he might mistake the motive. A feeling of reluctance to pronounce the name of Adelaide to Lady

Delmaine had of late taken possession of Sir Arthur, and caused him to pass over in silence the Doctor's proposal, which had afforded such relief to himself, till he should be sure of its taking effect.

No sooner did the guardian find himself alone with his ward, than he proceeded to express his extreme satisfaction at his wife's apparent unconsciousness of the secret he had so much at heart to conceal from her. The observations of Augustus had led to a very different conclusion, but he saw no good end to be answered by imparting them, and confined his remarks to the traces of illness in her looks ; proposing to ride over to Dr. Cosby, and induce him to come, as if by chance, the very first opportunity ; Lady Delmaine having positively declined his being sent for, and denied the existence of actual indisposition. — This was gladly acceded to, and the young man mounted his horse the next

morning for the purpose, hinting the possibility of his being induced to ride on to Samford Lodge, should the cross-questioning of the Doctor lead to the slightest suspicion of his having at all softened the true state of his patient; Sir Arthur, of course, gave every encouragement to the suggestion.

Having now satisfied himself that he had done what was requisite for insuring his wife's peace of mind, Sir Arthur relinquished all farther attempt at exertion, and fell back into the state of melancholy abstraction from which he had been roused by Lady Samford's letter. Lady Delmaine's spirits sunk in corresponding sympathy, and poor Charlotte was ready to hang herself.

Dr. Cosby fully confirmed the report he had made; but it occurred to the zealous inquirer, that twenty-four hours having elapsed since he had left the invalid, it was desirable to ascertain her continuing in as promising a way as when

he saw her, and Augustus resolved on proceeding to the Lodge.

Desirous of avoiding any communication with her Ladyship, he asked only for Miss Delmaine, and was shown into the parlour by Fritz, who understanding very little English and never catching a name right, no farther information reached Julia than that some gentleman wished to speak to her. Little imagining, or indeed caring who it might be, she entered the room, when, as her eye fell upon him, "Augustus!" she joyfully shrieked, "I am so surprised"—and overpowered by emotion, she caught hold of a chair, and by sinking into it saved herself from falling.

Affectionately taking her hand, he said, in the kindest tone of voice, "Dear Julia, you are over-tasking your strength in this distressing attendance upon your friend. How faint and ill you look!"

These expressions of tender concern

vibrated so forcibly on her heart, that she burst into tears.

“ Dear girl ! I cannot bear to see you thus ;” for her tears were bordering upon hysterics ; “ you are indeed ill : what can I do ?” and he was going towards the bell, but she stopt him.

“ Oh no, no ! — I shall be well in a minute, it was only the over-joy, — I mean the suddenness ; — any thing that hurries my spirits makes me behave so foolishly : — I am quite ashamed of myself, Augustus,” — articulating these broken sentences between her sobs.

Sincerely concerned at the great change in her appearance, and inwardly reproaching his own remissness in having allowed the tumult of his feelings since his return so to ingross him, as to have driven all enquiry concerning her completely from his recollection, he now checked his eager solicitude respecting Adelaide, till he had more particularly questioned Julia with regard to herself,

which he did with the most fraternal anxiety.

Alas ! the good girl was now unconsciously cherishing the most fatal enemy to her repose, fallacious hope. The immediate departure of Augustus after his rejection, seemed so decisive of his foregoing all further thoughts of Adelaide, that a latent undetected spark had still lingered in her bosom and saved her from sinking altogether under her disappointed affections. Combined with this persuasion, his present suppression of the real object of his visit, and the tender solicitude evinced for herself, all concurred to fan the spark into a lambent flame, that played so cheerily round her hitherto drooping heart as nearly to bewilder her senses. The rapid revulsion manifested itself in the fluctuations of her countenance. But her visitor, impressed with the one idea of over-fatigue, became only more urgent for her care of herself.

He at length touched upon the subject

of the invalid, but in such a tone of betraying hesitation as would speedily have withdrawn the veil from eyes less obscured by internal commotion than Julia's. Her deep interest in her friend now took place of other thoughts, and somewhat quieted her perturbation. Her report was satisfactory; favourable symptoms were progressively increasing; and she heard with delight of the Doctor's friendly intentions about their removal,—for she too had suffered great anxiety from the idea of carrying home infection to Charlotte. Lady Samford, moreover, had testified unequivocally, by the length to which she affected to carry her apprehensions of every species of intercourse with those who had access to the sick chamber, that a termination of the visit would be no undesirable circumstance. Common delicacy must therefore have impelled them to accelerate their departure the moment it became practicable with any degree of safety to Adelaide;

a reflection which much enhanced the relief of finding it likely to be so agreeably accomplished. Augustus had not been quite devoid of the hope of gaining admittance to Adelaide, if he found her in a sufficiently forward state of recovery to be moved into her dressing-room ; and being now thoroughly aware of the romance of her mind, he had sought to school himself into such extreme caution, as should wholly keep out of sight his ultimate views and wishes, assailing her for the present merely with her own weapons by laying claim to nothing more than Platonic friendship. This, however, he soon saw was all premature ; she could only as yet bear to be laid on a couch while her bed was made ; so he prudently refrained from alluding to his expectation ; and, after having obtained the most minute information of every particular in regard to her, he contented himself with recurring to his injunctions respecting Julia herself, making her promise to re-

sign her station on the chaise longue, by her friend's bed-side, to Madeleine, and secure a good night's rest in her own bed. Then, with an affectionate shake of the hand, bidding her hastily goodbye, for he was very desirous to escape from any call of civility to be paid to Lady Samford, he took himself away, leaving poor Julia in a delirium of newly awakened hope, which caused her "bosom's lord" not to "sit lightly on his throne," but on the contrary, seem ready to bound through his confines, and compelled her to seek the readiest vent for her overcharged feelings in the sympathy of Adelaide.

Rushing precipitately into the sick-room, and throwing herself beside the couch, she ejaculated, "Dearest, dearest Adelaide!" and, impeded by a passion of tears, she sunk sobbing upon her breast, unable to articulate another word.

Wholly at a loss to conjecture what could occasion such extraordinary emo-

tion, her spirits weakened by her indisposition, 'Adelaide' instantly conceived some dire calamity had occurred, and in the most piteous tones of terrified entreaty cried, "Oh what, — what has happened? — tell me, for mercy's sake!"

Her distressed accents recalled Julia to a sense of her inconsiderate proceeding. Shocked and ashamed, "Nothing, nothing, indeed, but overjoy at his excessive kindness, when I so little expected to see him!" she promptly replied.

To Adelaide there was but one *him* in the world. "Your dear father come?" she rapturously ejaculated. "Oh, when was he otherwise than kind to *you*?" And so severe a nervous tremor seized her as greatly alarmed Julia, and with reason. These sudden alternations of joy and grief proved too much for her enfeebled frame, and her fever returned with increased force.

Julia was almost out of her senses with terror and self-reproach. She sent

off an express for Dr. Cosby, and certainly did not keep her promise to Augustus of sparing herself that night.

The Doctor knowing of no cause that should have produced a relapse, was both surprised and alarmed. Obeying the mandate without delay, he determined to make his 'chance call' at Hawkwood Manor on his return, when the intelligence he might have to communicate would give a natural plea for it. He found the paroxysm severe, with a considerable encrease of delirium; in which Adelaide, addressing him as her guardian, painfully awakened his attention to various circumstances before unnoticed, and which his old and sincere friendship for the Delmaines caused him to revolve and dwell upon with much anxiety.

"What, my dear —" he said to Julia, when at length the opiates had taken effect in quieting the patient; "what, my dear, is all this rhodomontade of platonics this poor child has got into

her head? hey! — I gave her credit for more sense from what I have occasionally seen of her.”

“O, Doctor! I’m afraid you are prejudiced against platonism!”

“I certainly have a most decided prejudice, as you are pleased to name it, against nonsense of every description, and *that* in particular.”

“I’m grieved to hear you call it so, — but I will not risk injuring the cause, by my poor defence of it. Only stay till dear Adelaide is enough recovered, and she will make a convert of you, I am sure.”

“Why, faith, if I were some twenty or thirty years younger, I could not so well answer for my own resistance, to beauty that might blind my judgment, and talent to make ‘the worse appear the better reason,’ — but I am cased in age and sober reflections, and not to be choused out of the result of sixty years experience by every ignis fatuus that

crossés my path, — for I'll allow that a more dazzling one is not often to be met with. Would to Heaven, I could convert my more stayed perceptions into a protecting shield for those who may be led astray by such d—d delusive stuff!"

Unwilling any farther to provoke the Doctor to the strength of language to which when moved in temper he was apt to give way, she prudently turned the conversation into an inquiry respecting the farther matagement of the patient — and there, for the present, Plato was suffered to rest.

The severity of Julia's self-accusation, as having been the cause of her friend's relapse, was the means of thus clearly opening the Doctor's eyes; in the extreme distress she was in at her own imprudence, she had not bestowed a thought upon what her little artless narrative was betraying; but he at once detected the impending mischief; too conscious, however, of the warmth of his

temper to rely upon effecting any good by his own interference, he saw that task had better be left to his milder sister : but he had been too much disturbed by all the consequences he foresaw, to be able wholly to suppress his discomposure.

Satisfied, however, to find a cause for the renewal of fever, which quieted the apprehensions he had at first entertained of danger, and having pacified poor Julia's fears, he proceeded to the Manor with the cautious determination, on various accounts, of passing over the relapse in silence.

CHAP. III.

DOCTOR COSBY made his appearance as the Delmaine family were assembling round the dinner table. "Just in pudding time, faith," said he, good humouredly, having now pretty well smoothed down his ruffled plumes, "though I should have made no scruple of putting you to the trouble of recalling the soup if I had been half an hour later; for I conclude you would admit me at even a more inconvenient time, rather than hear of my being summoned to W—— without giving you a call — hey! what?"

The smile of welcome at sight of the worthy man, which had displaced the now habitually depressed expression of Lady Delmaine's countenance, prevented his being immediately aware of he at

tered looks, and cordially grasping her hand with both his, he was going on cheerfully to some particular interrogatories respecting herself, when his tone suddenly changed, and he abruptly exclaimed, "Good God! what a hand is here, so burning hot and dry! — why, you are in a fever, on my soul! and I not sent for! What the devil do you mean by this, my Lady? Am I discarded and laid upon the shelf? Neither as friend nor physician can I be satisfied with such usage!"

In vain did Lady Delmaine attempt to refute the charge of indisposition, by attributing the symptoms he was so struck with to over-fatigue, from having been new arranging her books just before dinner.

"Stuff and nonsense, my good Lady," cried the blunt Doctor, "don't think to fob me off so! I must know more of this matter before we part."

"Well, my kind friend," she replied,

“ eat your soup in peace for the present, and turn your attention to others, who are as desirous as myself of making you welcome,” looking towards her husband and Charlotte; “ we will discuss your accusations at a more convenient opportunity.”

Following the direction of her eye, he now perceived in the looks of both those towards whom it had glanced, an air of dismay, that caused him to wish, — as he had often done before, and with no better effect, — that he had more control over these ebullitions of his feelings, than he had ever accustomed himself to exercise where they were strongly engaged.

“ This has been a concealment most unkind to us all, Matilda,” said Sir Arthur, “ if our good friend here is right in his allegation.”

“ *If* I am right !” reiterated the Doctor. “ Gadso, do you think I don’t know what I am saying? Am I to be deemed a novice in my profession. ”

should be glad to know? Why, only look at her eyes, that used to twinkle and sparkle till my senses almost ached in admiration of them, and now——”

Augustus interrupted him, desirous to turn the course of the conversation, and playfully observed, “ You are in no great danger of being deemed a novice *here*, Doctor ; but I will not answer for what might be thought of you in the country I am lately come from, where it is as incumbent upon *le cher docteur* to administer to the vanity of the patient, by complimenting her looks, as to enquire into the nature of her disease.”

“ I should not look for Lady Delmaine’s sense in a Parisian patient,” returned the Doctor, coming a little to his recollection, “ and, therefore, should be more guarded in putting it to the test.”

“ Now that you have contrived in some sort to ‘gild the pill,’” said Sir Arthur, “ I recommend it to you to attend to this most excellent calf’s head, dressed ac-

according to Mrs. Jane Cosby's receipt, by means of which we are held to excel our neighbours in it beyond all competition."

This, as was intended, happily led off the Doctor's thoughts, and consequently his conversation to his sister's perfections, an inexhaustible topic with the good Doctor, so as fully to answer the purpose for which it was introduced.

Lady Delmaine had at first made an effort to elude Doctor Cosby's observation of the real state of her health, by forced spirits, but one little inadvertent word, which had escaped Sir Arthur in reproaching her with unkind concealment, had completely overset and silenced her. The apparently trivial circumstance of substituting *us* for *me* — thus assimilating the solicitude of Charlotte and Augustus with his own, was instantaneously felt to indicate the decided decrease of that *exclusive* pre-eminent connubial affection, whose language, flowing spontaneously from the heart, can never be assumed to

as to deceive the kindred heart, accustomed to appreciate its truth. Should any of my readers have had fatal experience of the justness of this remark, they will know how to sympathise with Lady Delmaine's deep sense of what to many may appear a trifle scarcely worthy of notice, — and still the strongest proof of indifference remained luckily undetected by her, in Sir Arthur's own *unconsciousness* of what he had betrayed : but the tear that dimmed her eye did not escape the Doctor's observation.

Vain, however, was all attempt in the subsequent consultation he insisted upon holding with her, to obtain the avowal of the true cause of the nervous fever that was preying upon her ; — she would confess to nothing more than a neglected cold ; and the worthy man, who, with all his roughness had delicacy where his affections were interested, desisted from the persecution of unavailing questions, and determined to stay all night, and as-

sume the privilege long friendship and old age gave him, to have a serious conversation upon the subject, — after the family had retired, — with Sir Arthur, who on his part looked with eager anxiety towards the conference.

“ Well, my good friend,” the Doctor began, “ you must forgive the zeal of long-cherished affection for you and yours in the liberties I may take with you, for, upon my soul, I cannot resist speaking my mind.”

“ It is what I ever rely upon from you, my dear Doctor,” was Sir Arthur’s reply, in evident consternation at the inauspicious outset.

“ Why, then, I must fairly tell you, this dear woman’s complaint is of the most alarming nature, and what is worse, the only effectual counteracting remedy is far out of the reach of medical skill.”

“ Gracious Heaven! Doctor!” — in the most extreme agitation.

“ Sir Arthur, I have loved you”

a boy — admired you as a man — revered you as a husband — a father — but *now* — by all that's good ! it cuts me to the soul to say what must distress you, though honesty compels me, — but *now*, at a time of life which leaves no excuse for youthful follies, — when you might sit down secure in domestic bliss and the justly-acquired esteem of the world — are you giving way to a weakness that would scarce be excusable in Augustus Stanmore, — and breaking your wife's heart, — for that's the short and the long of the matter. Hey, what ?”

Sir Arthur had risen from his seat, and was pacing the room with hasty and perturbed step : — frantically seizing the Doctor's arm, “ Hold, hold, my friend, for mercy's sake !” he exclaimed, “ you will drive me mad ! no — trust me, you are wrong. — My disgraceful weakness I seek not to palliate, — I ask you not to spare, — you cannot condemn me more severely than I condemn myself ; but, believe me, I

would die ere Matilda should discover it: — never do I lose sight of that important object, knowing full well the baneful consequence: — mild, meek, submissive, she'd sink in silence, and by all that's sacred, I would not outlive her!"

"Then by all that's sacred, she *is* thus sinking!"

"Impossible! she could not tell you so!"

"*She* tell me so! Lord love her, no! 'Tis what she would *not* tell, that so clearly unfolds the sad truth to me."

"My very soul is on the rack at the bare thought! — it cannot be! Did you but know the pains I take to conceal —"

"Conceal!" he angrily broke in. "Gadzooks! take half the pains to eradicate, and all may yet be well."

"Can you, who have so long known me, be so cruelly unjust as to believe that I am giving way without a struggle to this unhappy passion that is destroying me? I have not words to paint the con-

flicts I endure ; the bitter self-reproach, the anguished days, the sleepless nights ; little can you imagine —”

“ No ; how the plague should I ? — thank my stars, I never had this mania upon me ! I have heard boys talk such cursed nonsense ; — never expected it from you though.”

“ Doctor, I know the friendly spirit that calls forth your somewhat harsh expressions, and met you, resolved to bear your expostulations ; but not quite prepared for being treated with contempt, nor do I well know how to brook it ; my altered looks that you took notice of might convince you it is no slight war I am waging with my feelings.”

“ Altered and haggard enough, God knows !” interrupted the Doctor, holding out his hand. “ Well, I beg your pardon if I have gone too far : this confounded warm temper of mine is always getting me into scrapes, by giving offence where I least intend it.”

Sir Arthur, taking his proffered hand with kindness and emotion, said, "I am ashamed of my own irritability; but the honest truth is, that the wretched state of my mind absolutely un-mans me; and this assertion of yours respecting my wife gives the finishing stroke."

"Well, I wish from my soul I could have spared it; but I see such a devilish batch of mischief accumulating, as makes me nearly crazy to anticipate."

"And yet I know not how to credit it. Who should have told her?"

"Who? — Why, bless my soul and body! your own abstracted dejected air — your sudden start and conscious change of colour, if the name of Adelaide unexpectedly strike your ear — as when Lady Delmaine asked me for a particular account of her after dinner to-day. I am not very deep in such matters, to be sure, but just enough for symptoms so obvious."

"Powers of mercy! am I indeed so

destitute of self-command! What is to be done?"

"Keep the fascinator at a distance for one thing, and set seriously about forgetting her for the next."

"Forget her! — oh that I could! But her lovely image is so interwoven with the inmost fibres of my heart, that not till it ceases to beat, can it ever be obliterated!"

"By my soul, I'll not listen to such rhodomontade flights! I should think myself an accomplice in the destruction of your poor wife."

"Your conscience may be at rest, both in listening to, and forgiving them, Doctor, when I add my firm purpose — cost what it may — of future separation in the best mode I am able to devise from this too dangerous inmate."

"God bless you for that!" cried the good-natured man, cordially grasping both his hands, and a tear of pleasure glistening in his eye;" now I shall have

hopes that all may come round again in time!"

With a mournful shake of the head, Sir Arthur rejoined, "But you can scarcely be aware, my friend, what cautious delicacy of proceeding will be requisite with my poor ward on this head."

"We shall have Jane for our auxiliary there," said the Doctor, "and she'll make a better hand on't than her bungling brother."

"I learn from Augustus," replied Sir Arthur, "that he crossed from Calais with her early friends the Oldham's, which may afford a facility for—"

"A fiddlestick of the Oldham's!" bluntly interrupted the Doctor; "don't talk to me of anybody to take her away from Jane! She'll bring her to a right use of her reason again, rely upon't," he continued, highly elated with having, as he believed, been the means of carrying so material a point; for Sir Arthur did

not lay claim, as in reality he might have done, to the merit of having predetermined this important sacrifice. His spirit was too deeply wounded to catch at any such slender consolation, whilst he felt himself powerless to contend with the tyrannic sway that so cruelly mastered his better reason.

“That must with your leave remain for future consideration, and be governed by circumstances,” he answered; “for the present I am very thankful to have it so, and cannot easily give you an idea of the relief I experienced in your friendly proposal of removing her from the less desirable abode she is now in, to your sister’s respectable protection. One caution, my good friend, you must allow me to take the liberty of enforcing, that you be upon your guard against the absent habit of thinking aloud. Were you so to betray our purpose, the consequence might be more unfortunate than you can well imagine.”

“ Nay, nay ! don’t set me down for such an arrant driveller as that comes to, neither ! We medical men often see and know too much not to become very careful how we disturb the peace of families, — trust me there ! I shall be silent as the grave.”

But many an inadvertent word had he in the course of his long practice unconsciously dropped, which had produced effects of which he had never suspected himself to be the cause. Sir Arthur knew him too well to feel very secure, but saw no better means of obviating the mischief he dreaded, than repeated earnest exhortation, which he interrupted only when he found that it was tending much rather to put the Doctor out of patience, and send him in a passion to bed, than to impress him with the slightest distrust of his own circumspection.

Next morning, having prescribed for Lady Delmame, threatened her with persecution from his visits if she neglected

his directions, and settled when he should again see Adelaide, with a view to her removal, — he added, on taking leave of Sir Arthur, “ And let me tell you, that little darling lily of the valley, Julia, will stand much in need of Jane’s care likewise, for she has overtaken her strength in nursing her friend.”

“ Merciful powers !” cried the alarmed father, “ can I have been unobservant there too ! — so unpardonably absorbed in self ! — Oh, conscience ! conscience ! how dost thou torture me ! — for heaven’s sake, Doctor, attend to my sweet Julia !”

“ Foregad ! I shall have enough to do, I see, in patching up all the wounds this cursed man’s of yours is inflicting, — however, be but steady in your honourable resolve and all may be repaired still.”

Dr. Cosby it appears *could* be guarded when neither absent nor angry, for he had, as he intended, forborne to commu-

minate his patient's relapse, wisely deeming that such a proof of the vivid affection to which it was owing, was little calculated to promote the work of obliteration he fervently hoped time might effect.

CHAP. IV.

THE plan of carrying off the young friends from Samford Lodge at a moment's warning, did not appear as eligible to Sir Arthur,—who thought some return of courtesy due for hospitality, whatever his opinion of the hostess, — as it did to the Doctor, who was eager to seize every opportunity of testifying his utter disregard of her. Augustus Stanmore was, therefore, deputed a very willing messenger, to make the proper acknowledgments, and inform Lady Samford that she should be released from her troublesome inmates, whenever it should be pronounced perfectly safe. His reception was not at first the most gracious. Her Ladyship was thoroughly out of humour with the whole affair.

Sir Arthur's behaviour to her had been studiously marked by the most distant good breeding, and to the Baron by the most repulsive coldness. Her conscience, not yet *altogether* seared to transgressing the laws of propriety, was keenly alive to any slight. She was deeply wounded by what she could not, however, conceal from herself she deserved; and this increased the irritation. Provoked also at having mistaken her man, whom she soon discovered to be far from disposed to give way to error in his own conduct, or to sanction it in others, she found herself every way foiled, and looked with impatience to be freed from the disagreeable visitation she had so injudiciously brought upon herself.

Augustus having said as much as he thought politeness demanded, and borne rather more from the lady than it warranted, enquired whether he might be permitted to pay his compliments to her guests.

“I really cannot take upon me to say,” was her pettish reply ; “for Miss Delmaine seems to consider me pretty much in the light of the mistress of a boarding-house, never favouring me with her company one moment longer than she can possibly help : — If you will take the trouble to ring the bell, you may send up what message you think proper.”

He did so, asserting at the same time, that Julia’s motive could only be to comply with her Ladyship’s avowed apprehension of much intercourse with those who approached the sick chamber.

With ready step and buoyant spirit the happy Julia answered the summons. — The flush of pleasure gave her a more healthy appearance than when he had last seen her. Affectionately taking her hand, he testified the satisfaction her improved looks gave him. Julia’s heart beat high on receiving such unequivocal proofs as she believed them to be of his

preference, — she did not trust herself to speak.

A little pause ensued, during which Augustus had turned an eager eye upon the door, forgetting at the moment that Adelaide could not as yet be safely admitted into Lady Samford's presence. Neither the look nor the impassioned tone of his subsequent enquiry whether he might be allowed to see her, escaped the penetration of Lady Samford, although they had passed unnoticed by Julia, too much occupied with her own feelings to be a watchful observer of those of others. But the perturbation that blinded *her*, disclosed a not unwelcome secret to her discerning hostess, much piqued by the Baron's marked sensibility to her youthful inmate's unpretending attractions, and willing to requite the pain she had involuntarily caused her. With the twofold design of planting the thorn of jealousy in the gentle bosom of Julia, and

of making something of a conciliatory advance to Augustus for the coldness of his first reception, she playfully observed, "Your eyes are great tell-tales, Mr. Stanmore ; you must have them under better control if you would do credit to your opportunities of improvement in the famed land of good-breeding ; it would there, I conceive, be nothing short of the crime of *l'èze-galanterie* to be so engrossed by the admiration of *one* fair lady, as to make you lose sight of the attentions to which we all feel entitled."

Not conscious to what deficiency of attention she alluded, but desirous to parry any attack on so delicate a subject, he replied, it was difficult to say where the land of good-breeding now existed. Politics and party spirit had so completely usurped its domain in France, the spell of an enchantress were requisite to re-establish even the semblance of any thing like gallantry ! "Will not your

Ladyship's zeal in the cause," he added, "tempt you to make the experiment?"

Although this had a complimentary sound, it was accompanied by a look of doubtful meaning, which Lady Samford felt her situation rather warranted; affecting, however, to take it in its best sense, she said, "So flattering a speech shows that you have escaped the taint of the soil, and I accept this *amende honorable*, for your offence in having overlooked my danger from Mademoiselle d'Haute-roche's presence, when you expected to see her enter this apartment."

Augustus, who now first understood what his looks had disclosed, was considerably distressed at the inference she had thus pointedly drawn from them. He had revolved, as he rode along, the extreme importance it was of, to any possible chance of success in the renewal of his suit, that Adelaide should not make too early a discovery of his having any such intention; prudence sug-

gested, that from Julia also, his purpose ought to be withheld, lest from very fervour in the cause, she should inadvertently drop some hint that might mar his hopes ; for well he knew how interested the dear girl would be to promote his happiness. In pursuance of these judicious cogitations, he had cautiously worded the message he sent up, to Julia only, — not, however, wholly devoid of the secret hope his eyes had so unconsciously betrayed, of the invalid accompanying her. — Taken by surprise, therefore, and confounded at Lady Samford's insinuation, he stammered forth an unintelligible something in answer, and, abruptly turning to Julia, asked whether he, who had no reason to fear fever, might not be admitted to her friend, having many details to communicate to her respecting both Madame de Montménil and the Oldhams ?

Desirous of a few minutes absence to recover her composure, she answered,

“she would see whether Adelaide were ready to receive him.” Her perturbation had indeed been considerably increased by Lady Samford’s observations, but not in the way so maliciously intended; for under her present prepossession she had construed the engrossing fair one to mean herself. She did not, in her extreme confusion, attend to the subsequent explanation, and the apparent embarrassment of Augustus confirmed her mistake.

“O, Adelaide! I can scarce tell you how Lady Samford has distressed me!” she said. “Could you believe her so indelicate as to tax Augustus with his love for me when I was present?”

“Delicacy does not seem to be what her Ladyship greatly values,” was the reply; “but I am so glad there is cause for the accusation, that I cannot bestow much pity on you, Julia, and I shall with double pleasure see him. Make haste to bring him to me.”

When he entered the dressing room,

she offered him her hand with frank cordiality, testified by a smile so bewitching as had well nigh put all his purposed forbearance to flight ; recollecting himself, however, he received her hand with an air of such visible constraint as would have appeared very suspicious to more experienced eyes than those now beaming so benignly upon him. He soon recovered self-possession in the friendly topics they discussed ; and Adelaide was particularly delighted with the intelligence of the Oldhams' return, and the warm affection they professed to retain for her, as faithfully reported by Augustus, whom it had deeply impressed in their favour.

A message from Lady Samford, importing her expectation that he would stay to dinner, first called the attention of the young trio to the immoderate length ~~of~~ his visit. Fully determined against exposing himself to any farther attacks from her Ladyship, he returned

an excuse, and forthwith departed; his heart more than ever devoted to Adelaide, — a fact, however, which he had so carefully guarded against revealing, either by word or look, that it was only on revolving what had passed, he discovered he had been so wholly absorbed in caution, as to have entirely forgotten to remark the disfigurement the loss of the eye must have occasioned.

The day now came on which Doctor Cosby was to carry off his patient and her indefatigable attendant, but not in the triumphant manner his enmity to their hostess had planned, marking his contemptuous dislike, by giving no previous intimation of his design. This little piece of malice, he was a good deal provoked to find, the interference of Augustus had foiled; but he became altogether incensed when he understood that Julia, in compliance with her father's injunctions, intended to make her personal acknowledgments to Lady

Samford before leaving her house. This point she was not suffered to effect without standing a sharp contest with the Doctor's displeasure. In language which did entire justice to his sense of the lady's merits, and which it is, therefore, more agreeable to to us pass over than to repeat, he stigmatised her effrontery in having ever dared to ask them into her house : — "Such a jade ought and must be made to understand the different footing on which the world placed her !" — And he went on in angry violence, till Adelaide, who was so weakened by illness, that even this sort of disturbance shook and terrified her, showed by her agitated appearance, the mischief he was doing her ; whereupon, as well as he could, suppressing his passion, he ended with "Well, well ! as Sir Arthur pleases : I am an old fool for feeling so much about it ; but it would have gratified me to humble her impudence, I must confess."

By dint of happenings, gentle driving, and care of every kind, the invalid performed the journey safely. The Doctor had been so loquacious on the subject of Jane's perfections, that the lively imaginations of his young companions, associating the external with the intellectual, had pictured to them a "Jane de Montford" at least. What then was their disappointment when, upon his exclaiming, "There she is, dear soul! Heaven bless her!" they beheld instead of the 'stately form,' and the 'robe flowing wide in many a waving fold,' a quiet looking person of diminutive figure and pale aspect, in a close dress of almost quaker-like simplicity, standing in the porch ready to receive them. Exchanging a look of astonishment, they with difficulty refrained from audibly expressing their surprise; but the silver tone of her gentle voice, and winning sweetness of the smile with which she bid them welcome, soon made

them sensible there are graces that speedily find their way to the heart, very independent of personal advantages.

The most judicious attentions were paid to guarding Adelaide from any ill consequences that might have followed this rather premature removal ; for, truth to say, the Doctor's impatience to get them both out of the hands they were in, augmented by the manifest disregard to the patient's comforts, which, beginning with the head of the family, pervaded every part of the turbulent establishment, had risen so high as somewhat to interfere with the caution the situation of his patient still required. However, imprudence does not invariably produce the evil it threatens, and in this instance it happily failed. His sister's undeviating watchfulness averted, as upon many a former occasion, the consequences to which his impetuosity might have given rise.

Julia could have believed herself in

Paradise next morning, when she compared with the boisterous disorder of the house she had come from, the quiet proceedings of this mansion of peace, where nothing was neglected, nothing was obtruded. The attentive Jane was the regulating spring that kept all in order, often without even the trouble of reducing her wishes to words. The hoary-headed domestic, who had grown grey in their service, watched and understood every turn of her eye; and the business of the family might have been supposed to be performed by clock-work, were it not that the punctuality was never so enforced as to become oppressive.

Adelaide had very reluctantly acquiesced in her removal to the Grange, from the apprehension of its retarding her return to Hawkwood Manor; but sensible how ungracious any opposition would appear, she suppressed her objections, and was rewarded for the sacrifice, by some hours of such uninterrupted

repose, and such a consciousness of reviving health at her awaking, as convinced her; at least, that from the accelerated progress of her recovery, her return to her guardian's protection could not now be delayed to any very distant period. Her mind experienced a relief in the prospect to which it had been of late a stranger.

“ Dearest Adelaide, what an improvement !” cried Julia, the moment she was admitted to her bedside. “ Madeleine tells me you have had such refreshing sleep ! — no banging of doors, — ringing of bells, — bawling of servants after one another, — singing and laughing here, — quarrelling there. You would have been amused to hear her expatiate upon the scene of confusion we have left ; and on the contrast in the dear good woman here, whose appearance so disappointed us : — such a pattern of every virtue under Heaven ! It is quite delightful of the

Doctor to have brought us within reach of her example ! don't you think so ?”

“ I think it is very happy for her to possess so much perfection ; but, for myself, I am quite satisfied with the example that is to be found at Hawkwood,” was the reply.

“ And such a dear little orphan-boy she has so kindly taken charge of !” continued Julia. “ You, who love children so much, will be so fond of him !”

“ I hope there will not be much time for that,” said Adelaide ; “ when I am well enough for him to come near me without apprehension of fever, there will be no fear for Charlotte, you know, and we may go home. You remember what my guardian promised.”

Julia very well remembered she had thought there was something evasive in her father's expressions ; but unwilling to occasion any agitation at present, she made no answer. “ You must let Madeleine tell you all about it !” she pre-

sently added, "for she is so full of the story of the little fellow, and of the servants' attachment to their mistress, her 'tongue runs thirteen to the dozen,' as the Doctor says."

"I do not like her to be so talkative; she wears my spirits," returned Adelaide, whose interest for this family was not yet much awakened.

Many days did not elapse, however, without its being excited in a degree that surprised herself. "Would one have supposed it possible," she said to her friend, "that without any personal attraction or elegant accomplishment, this little primitive-looking body should take such hold on the affections of all that approach her?—I declare I have not escaped the influence myself!"

"But are you just, Adelaide, in denying her all personal attraction? Did you not attend to Augustus's application to her of those sweet lines of Sheridan's on

Mrs. R. S. ?* so beautifully too as he recited them ? I thought he never appeared to such advantage, as when expatiating on the pre-eminence her charms of mind gave her over the ornamental education of the day. Do you know, I could have wished as I listened to him, to exchange myself with all the accomplishments I have been labouring so hard to acquire, for the plain primitive (as you call her), Jane Cosby !”

“ I doubt, Julia, whether *he* would quite subscribe to the exchange notwithstanding ; so I advise you to be satisfied

* “ Pale was her cheek, unmarked with roscate hue ;
Nor beamed from her mild eye the dazzling glance :
Nor flashed her nameless graces on the sight,
Yet beauty never woke such pure delight.

* * * * *

Her voice was music—in her silence dwelt
Expression—every look instinct with thought.

* * * * *

The slightest touch of woe her soul would melt ;
And on her lips, when gleamed the lingering smile.
Pity’s soft tear stole down her cheek the while.”

as you are. And how do you think I came not to hear all this ?”

“ I believe your attention was engrossed by little Harry, who was hanging about you ; and I own I rather wondered you could let it be so, when Augustus was conversing so very agreeably !”

“ There is more than one way to make the agreeable. Do you not see I was doing my part, by withdrawing my attention from the discourse he was addressing to you ?” This was said with an arch look that caused Julia’s face to hide its crimson hue on Adelaide’s shoulder, as she answered, “ Indeed you may believe me, when I declare he did not utter a word that might not have been addressed to anybody in the world as well as to me,” and an almost inaudible sigh escaped her.

Augustus had taken the very first opportunity of riding over to the Grange, after the Doctor, who was become his fast friend, had given him the intimation of

Adelaide's being allowed to join the party in the drawing-room. But he continued so much on his guard, as still to leave the young friends under the delusion they entertained, as to the object of his attachment.

CHAP. V.

THE convalescence of Adelaide was gradually, but slowly progressive ; and she was becoming very impatient for her return to Hawkwood, when a letter from Charlotte imparted the most serious and unexpected alarm, by announcing the rapid increase of Lady Delmaine's indisposition. Exasperated at her sister's long protracted absence, Charlotte had not been sparing of energy in her statements, and Julia, with terror in her looks, hastened to communicate the distressing particulars to her friend.

" We must go immediately when the Doctor comes home," said Adelaide.

" I certainly shall," replied Julia ;
" but I very much doubt your being allowed to accompany me."

Adelaide started. "I shall not easily give way on such an occasion, Julia, I can tell you;" and, ringing her bell, she forthwith directed Madeline to pack her things.

The news was quickly spread through the house; and on Jane's return from her morning's charitable avocations, she was informed of it, and found Harry in tears, having refused to eat his dinner, "because his pretty new friend was going away." Having pacified him, which she always had the power of doing with a very few words, she immediately repaired to Adelaide's chamber.

"My dear Mademoiselle D'Haute-roche, what do these preparations portend?" she asked.

"That you are going to be released from a troublesome guest, my dear Madam, who will carry with her a very strong sense of your extreme kindness, which she will never know sufficiently to acknowledge. The sad news from Char-

lotte of poor Lady Delmaine, will oblige us to go the moment the Doctor returns."

"Miss Delmaine is, certainly so called upon, I am grieved on every account to admit ; but I shall not so readily relinquish my interesting charge. Didn't you hear the message Mr. Stanmore brought me from Sir Arthur?—that he relied upon my not losing sight of you till that bloom was restored whose brilliancy should satisfy him your health and strength were what they had been prior to the sufferings you have gone through ;—and now that I see, by the roses I have brought to light," (for a compliment from her guardian never failed of that effect,) "how much beauty may still be beautified, I cannot wonder that your friends should be unwilling to dispense with so striking an improvement."

"Mr. Stanmore framed that fine speech himself: my guardian never makes any such. But I did not expect Mrs. Jane Cosby could be a flatterer ! and if I did

not know you too good-natured to make a mockery of my disfiguring blemish, I should think you had detected some foolish vanity in me, you took this method to correct."

"Indeed, my dear, I am no flatterer; and had I discovered any weak vanity in you, I should probably have suppressed what the feeling of the moment drew from me. Your blemish is so little perceptible, that I doubt its being observed by any one unacquainted with the accident; and 'a prepossessing exterior,' as somebody says, 'is such a powerful letter of recommendation to notice,' as can never be slightly thought of, though, unless supported by more solid qualities, it will, like pre-eminence in rank or wealth, only make deficiencies more conspicuous."

"Your remarks are always so just!" said Adelaide.

"I am persuaded," continued Jane, "that in what you called flattery, I told

you no more than your glass has done many a time ; for I can never credit the blindness of a handsome woman to her own charms, and am quite satisfied if I see them accompanied with understanding to rate them at their fair value ; ‘ a mere skin-deep perfection,’ as some sage moralist has called them ; though ever a most attractive possession, it must be allowed !”

“ I have heard mothers, who were reckoned wise, say, a girl should be kept in ignorance of her personal attractions,” said Adelaide.

“ Those wise mothers would probably find themselves foiled by the first foolish man that is caught by a pretty face. No, no ; let girls be aware of the advantage, and impressed, at the same time, with the knowledge of the snare it may prove, and if they have sense, it will avert the danger.”

“ If you had a daughter would you wish her beautiful ?”

“ I am afraid I should, — trusting presumptuously to arming her sufficiently with the counteracting preservative ; nay, if I were compelled to speak the whole truth, I must confess there was a period in my early life when I felt so mortified at the tale my looking-glass daily repeated, that I should readily have volunteered encountering the danger for the sake of the advantage.”

“ Oh, what a pity it would have been !” cried Adelaide, “when you have—” She stopt, feeling the incivility of the observation she was about to make.

“ When you have *done so well without it*, — was not that what you were going to say ?” Jane asked, laughing heartily. “ I am sorry you stopt short, for I delight in such *naïveté* ; and the fact perhaps is, that I have done better without than I might have done with it ; for I honestly acknowledge, that my pride is more gratified by the daily proofs of attachment I now receive from all about me, than if

personal attractions had a greater share in it. Love is to me, meat, drink, and clothing, — I could not exist without the consciousness of possessing it !”

Adelaide thought she might truly say the same, and was drawn nearer to Jane by the congeniality of the sentiment, — overlooking this wide difference, that by the love Jane confessed it her pride to inspire, she confirmed those around her in their duties, whereas the affection Adelaide sought tended to a deviation from them. “How entirely do I agree in that feeling !” chimed in Adelaide ; “there is no existing without being beloved !”

Jane perceived her meaning, but reserved the comment to a fitter opportunity ; pursuing her subject, therefore, she continued, “And in sober earnest I will avow, that my eye rests with so much pleasure on a beautiful object, that if I had actually been such, I have no doubt it would have made me very silly and

very disagreeable. So now, having talked myself perfectly into conceit with my own ugliness, let us return to what we have wandered pretty far from, — the motive of my interrupting your preparations, — which I have nevertheless most seriously at heart, — and that is, to obtain your giving up all thoughts of accompanying Miss Delmaine !”

“ Impossible, dear Madam ! quite impossible ! Lady Delmaine is to me a most affectionate mother, and I would never forgive myself for not flying to her when she is ill !”

“ If she had no daughters, and you were fit for the undertaking, it would be different.”

“ But I must be a monster of black ingratitude,” rejoined Adelaide, “ to let any consideration of *self* have weight—” She stopt suddenly, colouring with the consciousness of hypocritically disclaiming *self*, when it was in fact the sole instigator of her thoughts ; for she felt at

that moment too clearly that it was the prospect of readmission to her guardian's house, far more than the duty of attendance on Lady Delmaine, that made her so eagerly desire to return. Suppressing, therefore, what she had begun to urge, she only added, with a very confused look, "Forgive my resistance to your persuasions ! I have the strongest reasons for going. I beg of you not to ask them. I alone can judge of their importance."

Jane saw what had passed in her mind, and honoured the candid impulse that had checked the disingenuous plea she was about to make. "We shall hear what my brother says to it when he comes home," was the reply ; "nothing can be done till then, you know." Adelaide's heart failed her at the prospect of a contest with the Doctor ; but she determined to try what firmness would do, without giving reasons or arguing the point.

Harry's voice was now heard at the door, suing for admission in a piteous

tone : "Here comes another little pleader in the same cause," said Jane ; "you see what an interest you have excited amongst us."

"Will she stay, mamma?" the child eagerly asked, as he was bid to come in.

"Ask Mademoiselle d'Hauteroche yourself, Harry, and say what you said to me."

"I said, if she knew how dearly we all love her, she was too good-natured to make us so very sorry, — now a'n't you too good-natured? — and won't you stay?" — looking earnestly in her face, with eyes full of tears.

Adelaide, affected, hugged him to her bosom, saying, "I must take you with me I believe, — will you come?"

"And mamma Jane, and Sally, and all?" said the child.

"You shall come back to them, when you are tired of being with me at Hawk-wood."

"O, but that won't do at all," with a

look of disappointment ; “ I can’t go away and leave them that have loved me such a great long while, you know.”

This engaging little creature was the object of Jane’s tenderest care ;—he had been thrown by extraordinarily distressing circumstances on her benevolence, and happy, indeed, for him to have fallen on so rich a soil ! — His parents had arrived late one evening at the head inn of the town of W——. The poor invalid husband was with difficulty lifted out of the post-chaise, evidently in the last stage of a decline ; and the unhappy wife, on opening her eyes the next morning, had the dreadful shock of finding him a corpse by her side. It brought on premature pains. The landlord had sent off for Dr. Csby, (who lived but half a mile distant,) upon the alarm being given in the house, of the traveller’s death, and the Doctor ascertaining the critical state of the poor wife, had immediately summoned Jane to her assistance. In the

short intervals from suffering, that left her any power of speech, she said, that her husband was an officer on half-pay, — that she had disobliged her friends by her marriage, — that they were proceeding to throw themselves on their mercy, in the hope of softening their resentment by the sight of the extreme distress to which they were reduced, — that her Henry had become alarmingly worse in the last two days' journey, — but she had no idea of the sad close being so near at hand.

Jane, deeply moved, gave unremitting attendance to the forlorn sufferer, who expired at the end of twenty-four hours, — heaving her last sigh in blessing Jane as she beheld the babe in her protecting arms ; whilst Jane at the same moment breathed an inward vow to supply its mother's place, and never suffer it to be beholden, if she could help it, to unfeeling relations. It was, however, deemed proper to give them notice of its existence,

and thankful she was to find that this intimation produced no return. She sent for a young woman to nurse the infant, on whom she could thoroughly depend, and it throve under her care as well as, from the unfavourable circumstance of untimely birth, could be expected. With the countenance and disposition of a cherub, and an intelligence beyond his age, (which was between four and five years,) his frame was delicate in the extreme. Having gone through the various complaints to which children are liable, he had lately had a scarlet fever that had left a sad debility in his limbs, and greatly added to the interest he inspired. — As there existed no objection to bringing him into Adelaide's way, Jane very early introduced him into her apartment, with a view of his proving a source of amusement to her, and he very quickly became a great favourite, and so fond of her in return, that he was never quite happy out of her sight.

A day of more racking impatience than this proved, was scarce ever before experienced by the two friends. — Their preparations all in readiness for setting out the instant the Doctor's *fiat* should be obtained, — their watches in their hand counting every minute as it passed, — and many a weary one they had leisure to count, — the day seemed as though it would never come to an end, for the Doctor did not reach home till late in evening. They hardly gave him leisure to alight ere they assailed him with their fears and their wishes.

“Gad ha’ mercy! let me breathe,” he cried: “you wouldn’t set out at this time o’night, I suppose.”

“No; but by break of day, if he would allow them,” they answered with one voice.

“No, faith! that I shall not, at any rate! so lay your impatience to rest upon your pillows, and leave me to recover from my fatigues, which, upon my soul,

have nearly knocked me up : to-morrow you shall hear more of my mind. Not another word shall you get from me to-night, by Heaven !" for they were both beginning an eager remonstrance : — " so troop off to bed with you, -- do !"

The poor disappointed girls, well knowing how little was gained by contest with him, sought their pillows as he directed, but with small chance of finding repose there.

The good man was sufficiently distressed with the news he had to tell, and knew not how to set about imparting it. The first effect of the difficulty was, as usual, to put him out of humour, and this, of course, as he had many a time and oft experienced, did not help him to get over it.

A summons by express from Augustus had called him to Hawkwood at an early hour that morning, — a circumstance he had carefully concealed even from his sister, and to which Charlotte's letter

made no allusion, having, by the occasional awkwardness of cross country posts, been two days on the road. But before explaining to the reader what had happened at the manor, it will be necessary to go a little way back in our story, to acquaint him with the result of the Doctor's undisguised communication to its unhappy master, of the true cause and dangerous tendency of his wife's indisposition.

From the moment that Sir Arthur could no longer deceive himself into the belief of Lady Delmaine's blindness to the real state of his feelings, he had been in a frame of mind nearly bordering upon insanity. Struggling unremittingly, though in vain, against the consuming passion that had acquired such irresistible mastery over him,—cut to the soul by the conviction, which he could now no longer avoid, of the miserable effects upon the woman whose peace he had fruitlessly endeavoured to secure, by

every sacrifice in his power, and who must now consider every mark of his attention as mean hypocrisy, — and, in addition to all this, burdened with the knowledge of the wretchedness to which he was devoting Adelaide, in keeping her at a distance, — it will naturally be presumed, that such severe and daily conflicts could not be long endured with impunity. A tendency of blood to the head soon manifested itself, of which he would not complain. Augustus alone was privy to these mental and physical sufferings, and strictly prohibited from imparting them to Doctor Cosby, in his visits to the Grange. To this injunction he paid due obedience, till he perceived symptoms of fever, so alarming as to call for medical assistance of a higher order than what was immediately at hand, and he despatched the express.

Meanwhile, Lady Delmaine's complaint had been rapidly gaining ground.

The agitated state of her husband's mind could not escape her notice, although she studiously concealed from him her being aware of it;—but when she missed him that morning at the breakfast table, and was told he was not well enough to rise, no arguments Augustus could suggest, of possible danger from the fever, or mischief to her own indifferent health, deterred her from taking her station at Sir Arthur's bed-side, though she strenuously added her commands to his persuasions against Charlotte's entering the sick chamber.

What had chiefly prompted the anxiety of Augustus to keep Lady Delmaine away, soon took place. Delirium came on, and the name of Adelaide dwelt constantly on his lips. “Cherished idol of my soul!” he at one time exclaimed: “adored Adelaide! urge me no more, — it may not be!”

“What may not be?” the wretched listener eagerly longed, yet dreaded to

learn, — but would not allow herself to ask, disdaining so to purloin confidence, even had she been sure of a rational answer. The daggers spoken, however, pierced deep, her tears flowed fast, and a hysterical sob caught his ear.

“Nay ; weep not, love !” he said, “Matilda might discover—” and he muttered something unintelligibly.

This was more than she could bear, and she was hastily leaving the room, as Doctor Cosby (just arrived) entered it. “For Heaven’s sake, what are you doing here, Lady Delmaine ?” he cried. “The last place you ought to come into, surely ! In your weakened state you are doubly liable to injury. I must positively interdict this attendance !”

“I had done better to omit it, indeed !” said the heart-riven woman, as she passed on to her own apartment, where she gave loose to a burst of grief beyond what she had yet experienced ; for now she was seized with the dread of

some dereliction of principle on the part of Adelaide, whose error she had hitherto deplored, without any distrust of the purity of her heart.

The Doctor pronounced the fever of a typhus kind, and having directed the necessary precautions for the safety of the rest of the family, he proceeded with anxious solicitude to seek admittance to Lady Delmaine, whose looks, as he met her, had greatly alarmed him. The violence of the emotion had by this time subsided, and an air of despondency taken its place, which deeply affected him. She was not more open-hearted to his interrogatories than before, but he saw all the unfavourable symptoms of her disorder fast increasing, and without hesitation, ordered her immediately to Bristol Hot Wells.

“ And leave Sir Arthur dangerously ill? Never, Doctor! I must resist such a prescription as that!”

“ And I must be despotic in enforcing

it, my dear Madam. Near Sir Arthur neither you nor Charlotte can come ; — in Mr. Stanmore he has a zealous and affectionate nurse, who in his schoolboy days has, to my certain knowledge, gone through the ordeal of all the fevers that can be feared : no apprehensions are, therefore, to be entertained for him, and he is entirely to be relied on.”

“ Let me but stay, to be assured my husband is out of danger, and I will implicitly obey you.”

“ I cannot dispense with your implicit obedience now ; — I cannot, upon my soul !”

“ Give me but a week ! You said, in that time you could pronounce with certainty.”

“ By all that’s good, I would not give you a day, — not an hour, but what I know women’s nonsensical fiddle-faddles always require ! — Gadzooks ! Lady Delmaine, it would provoke a saint to hear you thus contending for your own de-

struction!" — the Doctor was fast waxing wroth.

"If you have no consideration for the accumulated misery this cruel absence will bring upon me, do but take into the account the strange appearance to the world of —"

"Damn the world!" interrupted the Doctor, now completely in a rage; then taking two or three hasty strides across the room, by means of which he was sometimes able to digest a sudden ebullition of choler, he resumed his seat, — and, with a little more calmness, said "Am I esteemed the friend of this family? or merely its medical attendant?"

"My good Sir! what an unkind d does that question imply!"

"Why, my good Lady, it simply implies thus much, — if, as I have ever thought myself, I am accounted your old and steady friend, a double responsibility is mine; and how the devil do you think I could answer it to Sir Arthur on

his recovery, if, for want of energy in enforcing a necessary step, I exposed him, whilst unable to act for himself, to the hazard of losing the loved partner of his life."

" Ah, Doctor ! there was indeed a time when such a loss—" her eyes filled, and she suddenly checked the avowal of her secret grief, which this unexpected appeal was unguardedly drawing her into betraying.

The Doctor, affecting not to have attended to it, went on, — " I feel myself compelled to warn you fairly, that your only security for recovery is an immediate removal to Bristol. Here, I repeat, neither you nor Charlotte can be, in the present state of things, of the smallest use. I, therefore, insist upon your setting out to-morrow morning ! — Julia has, Augustus tells me, had a summons home from Charlotte, which would reach her to-day ; so I will myself convey her the two stages to-morrow,

which will bring her to meet you on your road; for it will be best that both your daughters should be with you, to keep up your spirits; and Jane will pay all due attention to Mademoiselle d'Hauteroche, with whom she is highly captivated."

Lady Delmaine, interrupting him, said, with some embarrassment, "Will you frankly answer me a question?"

"Gadso! when did you ever get any other than a frank answer from me?—Say on, my Lady!"

"Does Adelaide," hesitatingly, "appear to your sister,—I mean, do you find her as entirely deserving of your good opinion as I have ever thought her?"

"Does she?—Upon my soul I only think her too perfect for this world; and Jane quite agrees with me, except, indeed, when she mounts that cursed Platonic hobby, which bewilders her brain, and puts one out of all manner of patience; and then I tell her that Swēdenborg himself, with his celestial inter-

course, and all his tier of heavens, was not madder than she is ; — but Jane says, getting into a passion is not the way to convince her, — and egad, I believe she's right enough. — But all this is very foreign to the purpose, and my time runs short ; — so now, be pleased to tell me what I have to depend on in regard to to-morrow, — for, by all that's sacred, unless you conform *in toto* to what I have been enjoining, I shall wash my hands of you altogether, and leave the treatment of the patient to your neighbour doctor, who, as far as the typhus goes, is as competent as myself."

" O, no, no ! — for pity's sake, dear Doctor ! — to none but yourself could I bear to have Sir Arthur intrusted."

" I have said my say. You know the condition, from which I'll not recede an inch, curse me if I do ! — so there's an end on't. I'll give you time to make up your mind about it, while I just go

and see that my orders have been properly attended to, respecting my patient."

Lady Delmaine found herself, however reluctantly, compelled to give way to a tenacity which, she well knew, it was in vain to contend with, and at the Doctor's return the business was arranged to his wish. He took his leave, after appointing the hour at which Juliá should meet her mother on the road to the Hot Wells, and as he travelled homewards, he set about revolving his plans of proceeding with Adelaide and Julia, — what he should impart, and what withhold, — without being at all able to come to any farther conclusion than that of having recourse to Jane, which, indeed, was a very usual result of his deliberations ; — and well was it for those concerned, when it happened so, for her quiet good sense saved him and them from many a perplexity, into which his indiscreet and headlong vehemence would have hurried him. On the present occasion, the deep

• interest he took in the parties themselves, and the mischiefs he saw gathering, agitated and discomposed him to a degree that did not prepare him to meet the assault of the two impatient girls in one of his gentlest humours, or to answer their proposal in a way to afford them much satisfaction.

CHAP. VI.

THE result of the consultation with Jane was, to withhold from Adelaide the knowledge of her guardian's indisposition, which was therefore only to be imparted to Julia after setting out with the Doctor to join Lady Delmaine. In Adelaide's still feeble state of health they deemed it highly important to spare her, as much as possible, all increased agitation ; but no care could save her from the most poignant distress at this separation from her friend. Jane undertook the arduous attempt of consolation, as well as satisfying her of the necessity that she should remain where she was till better able to bear her share in the attendance upon Lady Delmaine ; but the gentle persuasions of Jane, her rational argu-

ments, her kind soothings, were all equally unavailing to reconcile the wretched girl to what appeared to her an ejection from her guardian's family. She parted from Julia as with her last hope in life, in agony inexpressible ; and when finally they tore themselves from each other's arms, she remained in a state of stupor really alarming, motionless as a statue, and apparently unconscious of what was passing around her. After various unsuccessful endeavours to rouse her, it occurred to Jane that the sight of little Harry might produce some effect, and she sent for him.

The child came running up to her expecting to be caressed as usual ; but stopt, looking scared at her strange appearance, " What ails dear Addly ? — won't she speak ? — won't she kiss me ? — don't she love me no more ? — dear, dear Addly ! are you angry ? " and the poor little fellow began to cry.

She gave a deep sigh.

"She is not well, Harry," said Jane ;
 "coax her to tell you what is the
 matter."

He flung his arms about her neck, and
 kissing her cheek, while his tears fell fast
 upon her bosom, "Do tell me where you
 feel pain, and let uncle Cosby make you
 well ! — now do ! — now pray do !"

His innocent tones seemed to affect
 her, and recal some sort of consciousness.
 "An outcast now ! and desolate indeed !"
 she half inaudibly ejaculated ; then clasp-
 ing the child to her heart, a salutary gush
 of tears came to her relief.

Jane felt re-assured, — this was the
 effect she had looked for. Harry now
 sobbed in unison, as if his heart would
 break, repeating, "Don't cry so, dear
 Addy ! don't cry so ! I will pray to God
 Almighty to make you well !" and sliding
 down upon his knees, clasping his little
 hands, he began repeating the artless
 prayer Jane had taught him, in which
 were always included the names of those

he loved, beginning this time with " dear Addly !"

" Ah, Harry !" she cried, " if praying could do any good !"

" That's what I am very sure it will, though I am but such a little boy !" returned the child eagerly ; " now, won't it, mamma Jane ? — you know I read with you on Sunday about our Saviour saying, little children might go to him in Heaven and ask for what they wanted."

Jane, delighted with this happy application of his little mis-quotation, caught up the dear fellow, and, affectionately kissing him, said, " Bless you, my child ! preserve this confidence ; and nothing in this world can make you long unhappy."

Adelaide shook her head.

Jane, wishing to carry the application home to her, without too obviously taking admonition upon herself, continued addressing Harry, " Those, my dear, who

are most in the habit of recurring to this remedy, best know its efficacy."

This was beyond the comprehension of the child; but Adelaide was aware it was meant for her: she, however, made no answer; it was a remedy to which she had never thought of having recourse.

"Now, that dear Addly, as you call her, Harry, seems a little better," said Jane, "let us persuade her to go and lie down on her couch, where quiet will help to recover her."

Adelaide suffered herself to be led to her own room; and making her over to the care of Madeleine, Jane brought Harry away, in the hope that from the gentle hint given, she might be induced, in solitude, to turn her thoughts to the comfort she herself would have sought. But the unhappy girl's mind was too full of grief to leave room for any new impression, and she gave herself up to unqualified despair. She believed every member of the Delmaine family engaged

in that affectionate attendance upon the beloved invalid, from which she alone was excluded. In vain had Dr. Cosby, before setting off with Julia, exhausted all his powers of rhetoric, enforced by a double ratio of oaths, to convince her that he was the sole cause of her being left at the Grange, and for no other reason, than its bracing air being as necessary to her restoration, as the milder climate of Bristol was to Lady Delmaine's. She was too strongly prepossessed with her own idea to heed his protestations, and he again set forth, with his temper ruffled by his failure in pacifying her, as well as by the parting scene between the young friends. When, in addition to this, his companion fell into an uncontrollable paroxysm of grief, on being made acquainted with the lamentable state of both her parents, his thoughts became so totally occupied with his efforts to console her, as to drive from them all recollection of the caution

to be given Julia against betraying Sir Arthur's situation, in writing to Adelaide, — which his sister had strenuously and repeatedly urged upon him.

“Had he recollected it?” was the first question she put to him at his return. To which, he pettishly answered, “If I could ever be tempted to quarrel with you, Jane, it would be for your eternal doubts of me on that head. To be sure I do, now and then, give way to fits of absence, when trifling matters are in question, but I can be as guarded as yourself in any thing of moment — hey! — what?”

Jane smiled. “This is momentous enough, Heaven knows! so I hope you have said the needful.”

“You may rely upon it,” was the reply, — for never could he be convinced of either having said, or omitted saying, upon any particular occasion, that with which his own consciousness did not re-

proach him ; although ever perfectly ready to admit his absence of mind in the abstract.

Some days now passed, during which Adelaide, notwithstanding the miserable dejection of her spirits, was more rapidly recovering her physical powers than she had yet done ; — for beside the advantages of youth, and a naturally good constitution, she submitted punctually to all the Doctor's directions, in the impatient wish of being soon considered well enough to proceed to Bristol.

The Doctor paid unremitting attention to Sir Arthur, who was also watched with the tender assiduity of the most affectionate son by Augustus. The fever ran high, and delirium was almost incessant. Much cause did the good man see to rejoice in his peremptory removal of Lady Delmaine to a distance from overhearing, ~~as~~ she might have done, even in the next apartment, the heart-breaking ef-

fusions of a passion no longer felt for her, — his ravings only varying from love for Adelaide, to the fear of its being discovered by his wife.

Poor Julia had been but ill prepared, by the distress she suffered in leaving the Grange, for the shock that awaited her at the sight of her mother, so dreadfully changed in so short a space of time; — for although saved from one species of torture by leaving home, it had cost Lady Delmaine no slight conflict to tear herself from her husband in so alarming a state; and at the moment of delivering over her daughter to her, Doctor Cosby himself was so startled with her appearance, that he just then half doubted whether he was quite justified in the very despotic part he had taken. Julia's grief pourtrayed itself so strongly in her countenance, that Charlotte's displeasure was mollified at once, and opening her arms to receive her, they wept upon each

other's bosom for some minutes, unable to find utterance.

The journey, being accomplished by easy stages, took several days; and Julia delayed writing to her friend till she could give an account of their accommodations, &c. trusting to Dr. Cosby's imparting the bulletin daily transmitted to him, either directly, or through Augustus, of the state of Lady Delmaine's disorder. Some time thus elapsed before Adelaide received a letter from Julia, in which was contained the following paragraph.

“As I still write in haste, and you have Dr. Cosby's earlier and more particular intelligence from Hawkwood, of poor papa, I shall not dwell upon that melancholy addition to our dreadful anxieties,—but judge, dear Adelaide, what a degree of comfort I have to resort to, in the gratifying thought of what we allowe to Augustus, for such unremitting kind watchfulness over him day and night.”

“Poor papa! — watching him day and night!” — and the letter fell from Adelaide’s hand, as she repeated those astounding words to herself. “Gracious heaven! what could this mean? — ill! — Sir Arthur ill! — and every female of his family away! — and left to the care of a thoughtless young man! — and all this so carefully concealed from *me*! — Cruel kindness! — but they thought *I* would not so easily be deterred from fulfilling the duties of friendship and gratitude, if no stronger motive actuated me. — I will this instant go — Merciful goodness! I shall be thwarted! — they will exert the fatal power to which I am already a victim!” — She groaned in bitterness of spirit as these thoughts passed through her mind, — and not speedily had they found their way into it, for she sat petrified at first and utterly incapable of thinking; — she now pondered over the terrific words again. “Augustus watching over him day and night, — what might

it be? — all the females of the family removed! — could it possibly” — she scarce dared breathe to herself the dread surmise, — “could it possibly be mental derangement?” — She became faint with apprehension ; recovering, however, sufficient energy to determine on knowing the whole truth, she went, her letter in her hand, to seek Jane, who no sooner beheld her, than she guessed what had occurred.

“ I see your letter contains distressing intelligence,” said Jane.

“ It does, indeed, deeply distress me, — and I come to you for its explanation,” said the weeping girl, putting the letter into Jane’s hand and pointing to the paragraph.

Having read it attentively, she said, “ I can so far, at least, relieve your distress, as to assure you my brother thinks Sir Arthur doing as well as the nature of the complaint hitherto admits of.”

“ And with the nature of the com-

plaint, it seems; I am not thought fit to be entrusted," in a reproachful tone.

"It was deemed advisable, in your present enfeebled state, to save you from useless anxiety," returned Jane; "the complaint is a fever."

"On the brain!" screamed Adelaide, in an accent of horror.

"No such thing, indeed!" said Jane.

"Nothing will make me believe all would go away and leave him in a common fever," cried Adelaide, wringing her hands in agony.

"It was by my brother's absolute orders, as affording the only chance for Lady Delmaine's recovery."

"How could he be so cruel? She will die of her absence from him, if not of her disorder! — And Charlotte? — and Julia? — must he be deprived of the care of all?"

"They could not be allowed to go into the way of infection."

“ Julia had no such fear of me !” with an incredulous look.

“ Your’s was a fever of a different kind.”

“ Oh, I see clearly by your evasions, I have discovered the horrible truth !” and she paced the room distractedly.

“ Upon my sacred word you are mistaken, Adelaide ! the fever had a tendency to putridity, which alarmed my brother.”

“ And has it become so ?” — with rather more calmness.

“ It has in some degree.”

“ Thank you ! — I now nearly know the truth, and will bear it as I may ;” and she hurried away to her own room, where she was not long in forming the determination upon which she forthwith proceeded to act.

It has already appeared, that prudence had but very slender weight in Adelaide’s deliberations, and it never stood a worse chance of being admitted to preponderate

than on the present occasion. It is not improbable, that with her enthusiastic disposition, she might have taken the step she was meditating, though the whole host of considerations her own judgment could have suggested had been thrown into the opposite scale ; but, — offended at the concealment that had been practised upon her, which, perhaps, from the remaining irritability of illness, she felt more quickly and impatiently, — impelled by her romantic estimate of the duties of friendship, as well as by her love for her guardian, — for love it was, in all its juvenile fervour, though with the very purity of innocence, — she was in a state of mind which allowed her to consider nothing but how to elude all suspicion of her intention, till it should be too late to thwart it. For this purpose she shut herself up in her own room, lest she should unguardedly drop a betraying word. She then ordered her maid to put a few things together for immediate use,

leaving the rest to come after her, and charging her, on pain of her most serious displeasure, to keep the secret from every one. Under similar injunctions of secrecy, she gave Pierre his orders to go late in the evening into the town, to bespeak a post-chaise, to be stationed at a short distance from the gate by five o'clock in the morning. And then she sat herself down to detail, as composedly and succinctly as she could, in a letter to be left, addressed to Jane, her motives for what she was about to do.

Jane, extremely vexed at the circumstance that had occurred, and struck with the change in her look and tone on leaving the apartment, would not, however, tease her by soon following; but trusted that leaving her to herself would best promote her speedy recovery to some sort of self-possession. As dinner-time approached without bringing her back, Jane became impatient, and went to knock at her door. Adelaide excused herself

from admitting her, and from going down to dinner, pleading a head-ache which had induced her to lie down; and if it got better she had letters to write, she said, which would employ her all the evening: against this latter plea Jane remonstrated in vain, and retired from the attempt under considerable uneasiness.

At her brother's return she informed him of what had passed; "Confound the girls!" he cried; "when they get a lover into their foolish heads they can think of nothing else! Depend upon it, Julia's thoughts must have been running upon that young Stanmore when I cautioned her against betraying her father's situation to Adelaide."

Jane was pretty clear the caution had not issued from the Doctor's lips; but she never fretted him with reproaches.

"Well, what the devil's to be done now?" he continued. "Poor soul! faith it unmans me when I see her so unhappy;—shall I go and try to pacify her?"

—though I can give her little comfort yet, as to him, that's the truth." His modes of pacifying were not likely to be of much avail in this instance, and he, for a wonder, gave way to his sister's dissuasions.

CHAP. VII.

ADELAIDE's plan succeeded to her wish, and in a few minutes after five the next morning, she found herself, with her maid and her man-servant, proceeding to Hawkwood Manor, with all the speed to which the driver could urge his horses.

The astonishment of Augustus Stanmore, on being told that Mademoiselle d'Hauteroche was come, and desired to speak to him, may readily be imagined. His dismay was equal to it, for he instantly guessed her purpose.

“Stop ! stop the chaise !” he cried, as flying down stairs he perceived packages taking out of it, preparatory to its going back ; “Impossible to let her run this risk ! — Merciful powers !” he continued, as he burst into the parlour, where she

awaited him, — “how can Dr. Cosby answer it to himself to have suffered this, Mademoiselle d’Hauteroche? — it may be destruction to you to breathe this contaminated air! I conjure you, for the love of Heaven, allow me to conduct you back to your chaise, where I will give you every the most minute information you can desire respecting our dear invalid.”

All this was uttered with a vehemence she had been unable to interrupt; but, withdrawing from his proffered arm, she replied, “Dr. Cosby is in no way answerable for any imprudence of mine, Mr. Stanmore. I think I am competent to judge what the duties of friendship demand, and I should feel very unworthy to let any fears for self make me shrink from them.”

“Dr. Cosby insisted on Lady Delmaine and Charlotte leaving the house.”

“For that very reason I am come.”

“Good God! — with double risk from your own so recent recovery!”

“Half the risk is in imagination, or how do physicians and nurses escape? I will take the precautions they do; but attend upon him *I will*; and I do not conceive any one has a right to hinder me: so I request he may be informed I am here, and—”

“Heavens! inform him you are here! If he were capable of understanding me, the thought of your danger would alone be sufficient to kill him!”

“If he were capable to understand!” she reiterated, with a scream; “Oh, mercy! mercy! Heaven! then I was right, — and his senses are deranged!” and she flung herself upon the sofa in agony not to be described.

The agitation of Augustus was pitiable, — in vain did he repeat the assurance, that it was the delirium of fever only to which he had alluded. Prepossessed with her own idea, she neither seemed to hear nor understand him, but went on intermixing ejaculations of horror with hys-

teric screams and sobs, till he became so alarmed as to call in the assistance of Madeleine and the housekeeper.

As she recovered a little composure, his repeated asseverations at length seemed to reach her comprehension and obtain some belief. Still she declared she should not be convinced unless admitted to the sick chamber ; and for this she now again strenuously contended, and was as strenuously opposed, the housekeeper joining with Augustus in the assertion, that Dr. Cosby had declared the next twenty-four hours to be extremely critical, and that any thing likely to produce the slightest emotion in the patient must be avoided, as they valued his life.

“ And sure, Miss !” said the housekeeper, “ when my lady and Miss Charlotte, — wife and daughter, you know, ma’am, — were both forced to give up to the Doctor, and ready to break their hearts the while, *you* would not go for to withstand him at such a dreadful risk !”

There was that, in this simple appeal, which came home to some latent principle in the mind of Adelaide; of a higher order than those by which she was in the habit of guiding herself; she felt daunted, — remained silent for a minute, — and then replied, “I will not do any thing that can endanger my guardian !”

“ Blessings on you, dear young lady !” cried Mrs. Mason ; “ I was sure you had not considered that a friend should not put themselves afore the natural relations, though for certain master has been a parent to you—”

She was now obtruding such unacceptable observations, that Adelaide stopt her short, by saying rather drily, “ I’ll thank you, Mrs. Mason, to let my room be prepared for me. I shall be glad of some rest !”

Augustus again interposed his solicitude about her own safety, but to this she would not in any shape listen. — “ If the issue were to prove fatal to her

guardian, she could form no other wish," she said, "than to have caught the disease and follow him to the grave."

These were cruel words to the lover, but he did not allow himself to make any other comment upon them, than assuring her that the Doctor had hitherto seen more cause for hope than fear; and if she would but be prevailed on to take care of herself, happiness might yet be restored to all.

Adelaide had so far attained her object, as to find herself reinstated in the house of her guardian, from which she was firmly resolved that nothing short of absolute force should again remove her; and she now entered with some degree of calmness into expostulation with Augustus, ending in a compromise that she should quietly remain on the sofa where she was reposing, until he should have extended the precautionary fumigations to every room and passage in the house; and, moreover, that she should not at-

tempt to approach the sick chamber till these fearful twenty-four hours were gone by. To this last article her reply was more evasive than he was at the moment aware of, her full determination being, to make her way into it that very night, if it could be accomplished without risk of her being observed by Sir Arthur. Augustus, in return, agreed to dismiss the chaise, and give her an hourly report of the state of the patient.

Although under the most serious apprehensions for the consequences of so unadvised a step, and cut to the soul at the proof it afforded of devotedness to her guardian, — still he could not be wholly insensible to the gratifying circumstance of feeling himself once more under the same roof with Adelaide, and secure of constant admission to her, — which he could not suppress the hope of being able in some degree to turn to the advantage of his ardent passion. Giving himself some credit, besides, for having so

disinterestedly done his utmost to drive her away, he now, with eager alacrity, set about taking every method he could devise for securing her from injury.

But it was not Adelaide's wish to be so secured. Having peaceably agreed to submit to the housekeeper's medical treatment, she made a resolute stand against letting Madeleine sleep on the couch in her room, as she had been in the habit of doing ever since her illness, alleging it to be a confinement, and often a disturbance, quite unnecessary now that she was in perfect health. — Madeleine, with the most evident reluctance, gave way ; well knowing how far her mistress was from the health she boasted, — but she had only persuasions to offer, and though accompanied with tears, they proved ineffectual.

Adelaide expected to bring her plan to bear by the assistance of Betty the chambermaid, who had occasionally manifested a zeal to serve her by many

petty attentions, and through whom she meant to get to the speech of the nurse, the same that had attended herself after her accident, who, she doubted not, would be prevailed on either by argument, or gold, to favour her design. She took an opportunity of sending Madeleine on some errand, while Betty was still busy about the room, and appointed her to come to her when Madeleine should be in bed and asleep, as she wanted something to be done that must be kept secret. Little foreseeing what it was likely to be, and proud of the confidence, Betty readily promised secrecy and punctuality, and was but too true to her word.

Adelaide had suffered herself to be coddled and gruelled and put into a warm bed, with a compliance that delighted her faithful attendant; and, contrary to her own expectations, the harassed state of her body and mind sunk her in sleep so profound, that when Augustus, according to promise, went at

different times in the course of the evening to make his report of the patient, Madeleine had always assured him her lady was continuing to enjoy a repose from which she looked for the most beneficial effects. The usual bed time came, and Madeleine, satisfying herself that all promised well for her mistress's restoration from her fatigues, retired to her own rest.

Betty repaired to Adelaide's apartment the moment she could be certain that no interruption was to be feared. Her entrance, though on tiptoe, instantly dispelled the deep slumber which had before withstood the various disturbances Augustus's repeated applications for admittance had occasioned in the room ; — so alive, even in sleep, is the mind to the one predominating object with which it is strongly impressed !

Instantly starting up, "Is that you, Betty?" she eagerly said ; "Help me to put on some clothes and my dressing

gown, and then I will tell you what I want you to do for me."

Betty, surprised and somewhat startled, reached her what she wanted, but not without an earnest remonstrance on the hazard of catching cold, &c.

"I have no fears for myself," said Adelaide, huddling on her things in haste. "Now, Betty, you must be so good as to go and ascertain the exact state of matters in the sick chamber, and bring me word, that I may judge how to proceed."

"My lauk-a-mercy Miss! what are you thinking to do?" cried Betty, now in great alarm, "for sure you don't intend! — I couldn't take it upon my conscience, ma'am, indeed! — The Doctor have been so strict in his conjunctions Mr. Augustus says, that it makes one's hair stand an end only to think of going near the room."

"Hush, Betty! you speak so loud, you will waken some one. — Very well then, I don't desire you to do any thing so

terrible ! Only tell me in which room is Sir Arthur, and I will go myself."

"Oh, deeree me, Miss ! that would be ten times worse. If you should catch your death, you know ; — and the Doctor such an austurious gentleman ; — it would be as much as my life is worth."

"I carry that about me, which sets me above all apprehension of death : — so you need have no scruples ; only tell me the room."

"Nay, Miss, to be sure, if so be as you have a charm to secure you, its another thing ; and I should be sorry to refuse you any thing in reason ; so, if you'll be pleased to lend it me, I shouldn't be afeard just to go and listen."

Willing to encourage this misconception, Adelaide replied, the charm could only act for herself ; but there could be no danger to any one outside the door ; and she had the most powerful reasons for what she was desiring her to do.

After a good deal more of objection and dissuasion on Betty's part, she was finally prevailed on to go ; and brought back word, that she believed master must be asleep, for nurse was snoring by the bedside.

This promised greater facility for her purpose than she had dared to hope, and putting herself under Betty's guidance, Adelaide stole forth, with beating heart and faltering step. When they reached the antichamber, she directed her conductress to leave the candle there, and go away to bed, that she might not be involved in the blame of having assisted her, if discovered ; — and there could be no difficulty in finding the way back, she said. Betty obeyed, but very reluctantly.

The door between the rooms was kept open for air ; the bed curtains were undrawn ; the fever and delirium had run high in the evening, and the patient had sunk into a stupor of exhaustion, —

the nurse had dropped asleep in her high-backed chair, — and Augustus, who had thrown himself upon the couch in his clothes, was also lying in deep repose, but concealed from notice by the gloom. — The probability of finding him there had not occurred to her.

The awful silence of death seemed already to pervade the apartment — a cold shudder ran through the veins of Adelaide as she approached the bed, — the flickering lamp cast an uncertain and ghastly light upon the now pallid and sunken features of the sufferer — the blood seemed to retreat to her heart, and compress it as with a hand of ice ; — she, for a moment, almost doubted whether the spirit had not already fled, when a slight convulsive motion in the arm, which before hung lifeless out of the bed, so far relieved her terror.

Kneeling down by the bedside, and gently taking hold of the hand, she covered it with kisses, as she inwardly

ejaculated, "Beloved of my soul! should thy doom indeed be sealed, oh! may I thus imbibe the certainty of not surviving thee! — or should'st thou still be spared, and I prove the victim, may this rash act at least secure my ever existing in that fond and tender remembrance, for which alone I could wish to live, and am content to die!"

She remained for some time contemplating the dear, though dreadfully altered countenance, — to which the unshaven beard lent a terrific addition of ghastliness, till recollecting the danger of discovery she attempted to rise, but, turning suddenly giddy, she fell upon the floor in a swoon.

The noise awoke both Augustus and the nurse. The sight of Adelaide extended, as if in death, deprived him of all power of articulation; — with the rapidity of lightning, however, he darted forward, and, raising her in his arms, he fled with her out of the tainted air to-

wards her own apartment, now vociferating for help, in a tone that might have raised the dead, and which speedily brought Betty to his assistance, who had been watching on the top of the garret stairs for Adelaide's safe return to her room. Madeleine and the housekeeper followed in quick succession; and having so far pacified Augustus as to convince him she had only fainted, he was prevailed on to leave her to their care, and return to his post, where he at least had the comfort of finding that the patient had continued undisturbed by all that had taken place.

CHAP. VIII.

“WHERE am I? What has happened?” said Adelaide, as she came to herself, and saw ~~them~~ all busied about her. Betty, who alone could have given the information, was silent, and neither of the others knew how Mr. Stanmore came to have any concern in the matter; so no answer was made, and sufficient consciousness was shortly restored to induce Adelaide to refrain from questions which might betray more than she yet chose to have known.

She was at length once more safely consigned to her bed. Madeleine took especial care to stop every chink and cranny that might admit light, and she thus fell into a state of slumbering, dreaming exhaustion, till an advanced

hour of the morning, when she was suddenly roused by the sound of a carriage on the gravel below her window. The idea of Dr. Cosby immediately presented itself, and something apprehensive of the scene she had to expect with him, she hastily rung her bell, and got up with all speed.

“Not only the Doctor, ma’am, but Mrs. Jane with him,” said Madeleine. At this news, Adelaide, almost anticipating a design of carrying her off by force, armed herself at all points for fierce contest, and the assertion of her independence.

She no sooner came into the presence of Jane, than she began, “I am prepared for your displeasure, and grieved to have been under the necessity of provoking it; but, I fairly tell you, it can now be of no avail, — my imprudence is consummated: whatever mischief may be apprehended is incurred, and no power, but the will of him who alone has the

right to controul me, shall compel me again to leave this house !”

“ I came with very little confidence in my power of persuading you to do so, dear Adelaide,” replied Jane in her mildest tone; “ and have therefore taken, in case of failure, the next best method I could devise to screen you from injury in the world’s eye at least. — I am come to stay with you.”

This gentle return to a rather haughty address, entirely subdued Adelaide, and, melting into tears, she fell upon her neck. “ Oh, how little I deserve such goodness !” she cried, “ for my so inconsiderate proceeding : — of the world I had neither thought nor care ; — but I have drawn you into danger, for which, if you suffer, I can never forgive myself.”

“ Any danger I may apprehend, is not from the disease, — I am safe *there*, — but I shall perhaps not be equally so from the censure of the world, in abetting so unadvised a step.”

“What signifies the opinion of a world, who has no opportunity of investigating motives? It is assuredly *these* that constitute right and wrong! and little minds only can be guided by such fears! — I am quite certain your understanding raises you above them.”

“If that be a proof of understanding, you give me credit for more than I possess. I view the matter in a very different light, and contend that since the world cannot see into our motives, it behoves us so to guard our actions as to secure them against misconstructions.”

“I would feel degraded in my own estimation if I paid such slavish deference to the world’s opinion.”

“Heaven grant you may never have cause to rue the disregard of it!”

“Your favourite poet says, ‘the mind is its own place!’” — Jane had put Milton into her hand two or three days before.

“I doubt whether that would be in

favour of your argument if rightly understood : but poetic support might easily be adduced on both sides of the question ; I could wish to refer the decision on moral responsibility to higher authority. This is, however, too agitating a moment for such a disquisition ! Could I prevail with you, dearest Adelaide, to give way to my anxious solicitude just now, and return with us to the Grange, I will pledge my word of honour to restore you to Hawkwood, when all the family shall be re-united there, if I cannot succeed meanwhile in bringing you of your own accord to forego the wish, when we shall duly have considered the subject together."

" There is something so irresistible in your affectionate earnestness, dearest Jane !" said Adelaide, much moved with her supplicating tone and tearful eye. " that, although certain of never being convinced, I might so far concede as to

go back with you now, — but, — *it is too late !*”

“How too late?” startled with the emphasis laid on these last words.

“The mischief is irretrievable! I should carry disease and probably death home to you!”

“God forbid! What can you mean by so positive an assertion? — after what I am told of the precautions taken.”

Adelaide related what she had done, acknowledging, in addition to the circumstances already stated, that she had taken pains to inhale as much as possible the air of the bed, to ensure the success of her purpose.

Jane’s blood ran cold; she sat transfixed with horror at what seemed to her little short of suicide.

Before they had ever met, she had heard many of the cruel reports in circulation respecting Adelaide, originating chiefly in Lady Barbara’s prophetic denunciations, of which she was not sparing

to whoever would lend an ear, — though in part owing also to the open manifestations of an attachment, the self-deluded girl rather gloried in than sought to hide. The unlucky visit to Lady Samford, had given to suspicion so much the colour of truth, as to have operated to her prejudice even in the candid mind of Jane, till the Doctor's representations of the innocent enthusiast, during his medical attendance upon her, suggested a more favourable interpretation of her conduct, and awakened interest for herself. This, upon acquaintance, was very speedily converted into strong liking, and a sincere desire to open her eyes to her error, and lead her into the right path for extricating herself from it. A very few days had sufficed to show how wrong her head, how pure her heart, and how miserably deficient both in 'the one thing needful.' — Jane had tact to discover, that obtruded admonition was unlikely to prove either palatable or pro-

fitable to a mind wholly unused to it, of which also humility was far from being a distinguished attribute: she perceived that great delicacy would be requisite to give it any chance of effect. Of this species of delicacy she was eminently possessed, and hoped much from cautious and prudent proceedings. She had commenced her plan of operations by leaving books about, as if unintentionally, which, knowing what an eagerness for knowledge Adelaide professed to have, she expected to see her tempted to look into, and consequently, discourse upon, — and look into them she assuredly did, — but laid them down again as soon. Butler's Analogy, Clarke on the Divine Attributes, Paley's Evidences, &c. presented subjects which had hitherto been so foreign to her thoughts, that she was not attracted by them. In Milton, Cowper, and Young, she found some compensation in the beauty of the poetry, for the seriousness

of the theme. And Dr. Cosby pertinaciously retaining the key of the library in his own possession, she had no resource but to be satisfied with these; and the impression made upon her, by the sublimity of many passages, gave reason to hope she might gradually be led to dwell with more interest on topics so long neglected and of such vital importance.

The mortification of Jane, was that of a fond and disappointed parent, on being informed of Adelaide's departure, and having her letter put into her hand, — which simply stated, that finding her guardian was deserted by all the females of his family, and sensible how much depended upon those attentions in sickness, so much better understood by women than men, she had determined both from duty and inclination, to supply their place, and had only kept her purpose secret, to avoid the opposition it was likely to meet with on the score of health, which in this case was to her so

secondary a consideration, as not to weigh a straw in the balance.

Aware of the unfavourable impression such rash conduct would create, among those who had already made themselves too busy with Adelaide's reputation — Jane instantly resolved to take the only method she could think of to save her from the impending obloquy; which was — to follow her, and, if she could not persuade her to return, remain with her, — trusting that her respectable sanction might be a protection against the severity of censure thus wantonly provoked. Conscious of the high estimation she herself was held in by all who knew her, she felt sure of not being suspected of abetting any actual moral impropriety. All her tenderest interest thus verging to one point, she had scarce bestowed a thought upon any other, well knowing how much her brother was to be relied on for providing against them. She was stunned as with a thunderbolt,

therefore, at this strange and fearful avowal of Adelaide's, which left small room to hope she could escape with impunity. It was some time ere she could speak: her thoughts had also reverted to little Harry; there was no carrying this new danger home to him.

"For this I was not indeed prepared," she at length said; "there is now no choice; we must remain where we are, and abide the consequences, whatever they may be."

The tone of deep dejection, so unusual with Jane, in which these words seemed rather to escape from her than to be spoken, struck forcibly on the heart of Adelaide, already open to certain misgivings as to her precipitate proceeding, arising from Madeleine's report of the Doctor's increased hopes on seeing his patient awake quite collected from his stupor.

"Dear, dear Jane! I see I have perhaps been guilty of unpardonable folly!"

she cried. "What is now to be done? — can you forgive?"

"*I* forgive! — dear, imprudent, unthinking girl, *my* forgiveness is yours unasked. Would, the responsibility for your rash act ended with me! but, alas! alas! short indeed may now be your time for seeking that forgiveness hitherto so little thought of."

The entrance of Dr. Cosby here broke into their conversation. He came in great wrath at the intelligence he had received from Augustus of the transaction of the night, of which, however, he as yet knew but the smallest part; the conclusion naturally suggested by the situation in which she was found, having been, that she had fainted with terror at Sir Arthur's death-like appearance the moment she had entered the chamber. Adelaide immediately withdrew: though now pretty well used to his violence, and often diverted with it, she was not, in this instance, equal to cope with its outrageous

denunciations ; whilst Jane, contrary to her habitual forbearance, here felt compelled to add fuel to the fire by imparting the full extent of Adelaide's rashness, that no time might be lost in taking preventive measures, if any such existed. His unbounded rage vented itself in a coarseness of language neither useful nor pleasant to transfer to paper, and distressing enough to his sister, who had taken many an opportunity for remonstrance in his calmer moments against it, when the only result that ever followed was a sort of half-acknowledged conviction of error, by a " Well, well, if I had thought seriously about it when I was young, I might have got the better on't ; but you know well enough I mean nothing by it : it's only a habit, and there's no shaking habits off at my time of life."

" Oh, brother ! what a miserable plea for a rational and a *responsible* being to urge for so unjustifiable a transgression !"

" Why, don't I tell you, I wish it were

otherwise ; but I'm too old to mend, and so, d—n it, let's have done with preaching." And poor Jane found, to her grief, preaching to him was indeed in vain.

Having given time for the ebullitions of his spleen to restore him to some appearance of calmness, she informed him of her intention to remain where she was, and enquired into the possible means of averting the virulence of the disease ; but he was still too angry to think upon the subject. To Sir Arthur's recovery he began to look forward with confidence, "provided no fresh disturbance was kicked up," he said, "by this unmanageable girl to throw him back again." It was a very important point to impress this strongly upon the mind of Adelaide, as the only security against her farther attempts to see him ; and Jane, at last, got her brother's vehemence so far abated, as to engage for a calm admonition upon the subject himself, and that he would make a point of obtaining her

promise of implicit obedience before he left the house.

On retreating from the first burst of his displeasure, Adelaide had shut herself into her own apartment, and set about revolving what she had done more dispassionately than her overpowering feelings had yet allowed her to do. Her immediate and irresistible impulse, on learning her guardian's situation, had been to secure a participation in his fate, if he was to die ; and in the same temper of feeling she had indulged a gratifying certainty, that should he live, and she fall a victim, her self-devotion would have its reward in the hold she must ever after retain upon his tenderest recollections. But, now that he was believed out of danger, and her own fate still impending, she was led to reflect on the cruelty of implanting a thorn in his breast that must for ever rankle there, if he were made acquainted with her having wilfully provoked her own destruction ; and, with the

generosity inherent in her nature, she unhesitatingly resolved on endeavouring to save its ever coming to his knowledge. As yet, the Doctor and his sister were alone privy to the full extent of her proceedings, and she would leave no pleadings untried for a concurrence, on their part, in her present anxious wish for secrecy.

When Jane, some time after, knocked at her door to desire admission for her brother, saying, "He would no farther add to her distress by reproaches, but only meant to impart the exact state in which he was leaving his patient," Adelaide eagerly opened it; and, after expressing the most unqualified submission to his mandate, preferred her own petition to the brother and sister with such imploring earnestness, that they readily promised their fullest acquiescence, though the Doctor could not resist seasoning his with, "Aye, aye, my pretty one, provoked as I am, rely on't, I'd not expose you to be denied christian burial

neither, — hey ! — what !” This observation passed unheeded for want of being understood.

Having given some precautionary directions to Jane, in the event of alarming symptoms manifesting themselves, the Doctor took his leave. Among his injunctions, that of keeping up Adelaide’s spirits, and letting her dwell as little as possible on her own danger, had been strongly enforced. This was a distressing circumstance to one so sensible as the pious Jane, of the vast importance of the brief period that might now remain to the poor girl for her awful preparation. She sat painfully ruminating on the means of entering upon the momentous subject, without too obviously marking her aim, when Adelaide herself accidentally gave the opening.

“ I often think,” she said, “ on that pretty action of dear little Harry’s, — sinking on his knees, and praying for me with so much confidence of being heard, — it

was so touching ! What a pity he must lose that happy credulity of childhood !”

“ Why should he ever lose it ?” Jane asked.

“ Because he is a boy of sense ; and when he comes to the age of reflection he will know it cannot be.”

“ Fatal reflection indeed it would be that could so mislead him ! I rely upon that *confidence*, — which I grieve to hear you call credulity, — being strengthened in every future hour of his life.”

“ Is it possible you can wish to train him up in delusion ?”

“ Will you tell me your grounds for deeming it such, my dear ?”

“ The immeasurable magnitude of the universe proves to demonstration the utter impossibility, that a mere atom, such as man is, in comparison, should be an object of attention or care to its great Creator.”

“ That is an argument so frequently advanced, and which has been so much

more unanswerably refuted than my weak powers may enable me to do, that I feel cautious of entering the lists, aware how much the best cause may be injured by an inefficient advocate ; — but if that be the microscope which I perceive in yonder corner, it may offer something to your observation that suits our purpose.”

Adelaide looked surprised.

From among the wonderful contents Jane selected two specimens. “It has been strikingly observed,” she said, “that whilst the telescope tended to alarm and stagger our belief, by displaying the immensity of God in the overwhelming magnificence of the heavens, the microscope had providentially been discovered to unfold to us the consoling proofs of the same wisdom and goodness being present in the minutest parts of the creation.”

“A more encouraging subject to dwell on, certainly,” said Adelaide.

“It is in that light I so particularly

wish to draw your attention to it," returned Jane. "Do you distinguish the marvellous contrivance of this apparently insignificant filament you are looking at? It is taken from a feather of the wing of the commonest of birds, the hedge-sparrow! Observe by what extraordinary means it is adapted to protect the body of the animal from the wet (to which the feathered tribe must necessarily be exposed,) by the curious structure which enables it to resist separation from its companion when rubbed in one direction, and gives the facility of immediate reunion when rubbed in the other." *

"Surprising indeed!" exclaimed Adelaide, as she examined it with the utmost attention.

"Next," continued Jane, "look at this delicate gauzy underwing of the beetle †, with its wonderful assemblage of muscular tendons in such various, complicated, yet

* See Paley's Natural Theology for this beautiful illustration more at length, p. 231, &c.

† Paley, p. 347.

determinate directions, all necessary to enable the insect to expand, or again fold it up under its horny case."

"How blindly inattentive have I been never to turn my thoughts to considerations such as you now offer me!"

"Weigh them well, dear girl, and judge whether it be possible, with any shadow of reason, to conclude, that such benevolent provision should be made for the convenience of the very worm under our foot, nay, extended to animalculi, that even elude the investigation of the microscope, and attention denied to the necessities or supplications of man, the

"Distinguished link in being's endless chain;"

who alone, in this sublunary state, unites moral responsibility with physical faculties."

"Oh, Jane! dear Jane! that we had sooner become acquainted!"

"That wish satisfies me. It is not yet too late to turn your thoughts into the

only consolatory channel I can suggest, and you will find, that to question the possibility of a superintending Providence, on the ground you stated, is to circumscribe the power of the Omnipotent, and measure it by our limited capacity, which cannot reach beyond a given number of objects."

Though Jane's argument was not new, yet thus elucidated, it made considerable impression upon Adelaide. A conversation ensued, such as her affectionate monitoress had ardently wished to lead her to, but of a nature too solemn to find its proper place in pages trifling as these. Enough for them if they may happily contribute their share in practically enforcing this undeniable truth, that religious principle is the only secure basis of moral conduct! — its attainment must be the result of more serious studies. — This discussion, followed up by many others of the same kind, ere long afforded Jane the high gratification of finding her prose-

lyte determined to recur, with a mind properly disposed, to the perusal of that sacred volume to which she had thus far been so unfortunately a stranger.

When Adelaide and Jane were summoned to the dinner-table, after Dr. Cosby's departure, they had been joined by Augustus, who, for the first time, allowed himself any length of absence from the sick room. A day of such enjoyment he had scarce ever known; his friend pronounced out of danger, — the object of his love under the same roof with him, — and the presence of Jane offering a sanction for seeking her society, whenever his attendance on Sir Arthur could be dispensed with; — an occasion which, for some time to come, promised to be frequent, as the extreme debility consequent upon such a fever, would mostly keep him in a dozing state.

CHAP. IX.

It may have been observed, and thought not much to the credit of Adelaide, that she has appeared pretty callous to the melancholy situation of Lady Delmaine at Bristol, since the distressing parting from Julia. But the fact is, that Julia's wish to spare her friend's feelings, induced her to soften the representations of her mother's illness ; whence^{*} Adelaide concluded that Charlotte had exaggerated her's throughout. She was, besides, wholly ignorant of being herself the unfortunate cause of all the evil ; and moreover, it must be confessed, she cherished a sense of displeasure at a dereliction of Sir Arthur, for which she conceived there had been no sufficient cause. That *his wife* should so value her own existence as to wish to preserve

it, in the event of losing him, was in itself a feeling she could neither pardon nor understand; but if the case were as much less urgent, as she now believed it to be, she could not suppress a sense of indignation at such a proof of selfishness. And on this head she had given way to some strength of expression in her answer to Julia, as she entered upon the vindication of the step she had taken to supply their place:—little imagining how cruelly this very step was calculated to deepen the wound already so likely to prove mortal.

Julia, sensibly grieved at the imprudent proceeding, and hurt at the imputation, kept both, however, to herself, dreading the effect upon Lady Delmaine of every the slightest agitation; each succeeding day increasing, as it passed, the fears for the fatal termination of the malady. All possible precaution had been taken to guard against over fatigue on the journey by her anxious daughters,

but all proved insufficient, — she was materially worse on her arrival than when she set out. Her mind, so passive and quiescent in the hours of happiness, seemed to have reserved all its activity^f now to prey on her attenuated frame, and the progress it made was fearful.

It is much to be doubted whether Dr. Cosby had been equally judicious as prompt, in so despotically forcing the unhappy woman from her post. It was a heavy load of misery added to that under which she was already bowing. To leave her husband in danger, and incur the censure of the world for doing so !— no healing waters or balsamic air could medicine a mind so variously and sorely diseased. His chief object had been to rescue her from the confirmation, Sir Arthur's ravings were affording, of the alienation of his affection ; but this confirmation was already obtained, and, alas ! carried with her.

The Doctor was grieved enough when he found that instead of averting the evil

he had increased it, and he could only recur to the rash man's habitual excuse — "That he had done it for the best." But this consolatory phrase did not save him from incessant fretting and fuming over his own precipitancy, evinced in the daily worse accounts he received from the physician, under whose management Lady Delmaine, at his desire, had placed herself at the Hot Wells.

One inestimable benefit had soon, however, arisen to his patient from her removal, which the Doctor had neither anticipated nor considered. The physician, Dr. Morecroft, to whose care he had recommended her, was a man of acute penetration, as well as eminent medical skill. A very short intercourse with the invalid sufficed to show him, not only where the seat of her disorder lay, but also her deficiency in that supporting principle, from which a far more healing balm than the pharmacopeia could supply, in her present state, was to

be derived. His brother was rector of Clifton ; a man of exemplary genuine piety and mild conciliatory manners ; unobtrusively uniting the conscientious discharge of his pastoral duties, with the cheerful gentleman-like deportment of a man of the world : — a person, in short, exactly calculated to captivate the confidence of Lady Delmaine, and turn it to a blessed account. This brother, Dr. Morecroft very early took occasion to ask leave to introduce : her assent to the proposal resulted more from politeness than inclination, but happy was the hour in which it was given ! — the very first sight of his benevolent soul-illuminated countenance, impressed her with a feeling that speedily opened to him every avenue to her heart ; and each successive meeting served, gradually, to raise her mind to views of consolation so permanent, that earthly cares seemed to dwindle to nothing in the comparison.

Augustus was assiduously regular in

the bulletins he transmitted to Bristol, and minute in the intelligence they conveyed. And one little gleam of hope had again brightened the prospect there, on the day which brought the happy tidings of Sir Arthur's being declared out of danger. Julia, overjoyed both with the news and its effect upon her mother, insisted upon making the report herself to Dr. Cosby that day; and with this report the Doctor posted away to Hawkwood; his hopes as much revived, as if he had never witnessed the deceitful appearances of this most treacherous of all complaints.

The friendly trio were assembled in the library, and the Doctor just tossed the letter upon the table, crying, "Encouraging news from Julia herself:—Bristol will do the job yet, egad!" and hurried off to see his patient.

Adelaide had reached out her hand for the letter, but drew back, saying, "If it is from Julia herself, I will not

rob Mr. Stanmore of his right to have the pleasure of reading it to us.”

As he eagerly read the bulletin to them, she turned deadly pale ; — what was considered as an amendment, so strikingly showed her how much more imminent had been the danger than ever she had believed it to be, that she sickened with the consciousness of her ungrateful want of feeling for one so justly claiming her utmost sympathy. Jane, anxiously upon the watch for any symptoms of approaching disease, took fright at her change of countenance, and was rising to get some cordial her brother had recommended, when he returned, rubbing his hands in great glee, — “All going on here as well as heart can wish !” he exclaimed, “and all may be restored to harmony and happiness yet, if we can but bring some folks to their senses. — But, hey-day ! what’s the matter now ?” — looking at Adelaide. “Are you ill ?” — taking her hand to feel her pulse. —

“As cold as death, upon my soul! What the devil’s become of Jane? — See for her, for God sake! Mr. Stanmore, directly.”

“It is nothing, Doctor, indeed,” faintly replied the conscience-stricken girl, “but my great unhappiness at finding Lady Delmaine is so dreadfully ill.”

“Gadzooks!” interrupted the Doctor, “I believe your head is turned now in good earnest! Was there ever such inconceivable nonsense as this? — Just to give way to alarm at the very moment of hearing she is mending!”

Jane returned with the restorative, but it could not relieve the oppression of Adelaide’s spirits, and she retired to her own room, — leaving them at a loss to understand what certainly bore a somewhat questionable appearance to those who could not read what was passing in her mind. Jane adhered to her apprehension that it indicated a commencement of indisposition. The Doctor, in no way qua-

lified to comprehend the romance of the character he had to deal with, was inclined to suspect it was the fear of Lady Delmaine's recovery, rather than that of her death, which had produced such powerful agitation ; — it bore no affinity to any forerunner of disease, he was very certain ! Augustus saw it in a different light again ; but he remained silent and abstracted.

Poor Adelaide the while was giving way to all the anguish of bitter self-reproach, for having been so insensible to the lamentable state she now found her “ ever kind friend, protectress, benefactress, was actually in ! ” — her tears flowed apace as she pronounced these endearing epithets to herself, — “ extending her maternal cares of me almost to an equality with her own daughters, — so tenderly nursing me when I lost my eye ! — and *I*, unfeeling monster ! disbelieving her sufferings ! — accusing her of selfishness ! — ”

In this strain she went on till interrupted by Jane, who could no longer bear the uncertainty to which her sudden retreat had left the conjecturing groupe, and was not a little surprised at the deep distress in which she found her. Adelaide ingenuously acknowledged the cause, and Jane endeavoured to console her with the prospect of being allowed to join the family at Bristol whenever all fears for her own illness should be at an end; and oh! how fervently did she now deplore her folly in the risk she had so wantonly, so wilfully incurred.

“I fear,” said Jane, “Harry’s resource in distress has not suggested itself to your thoughts on this occasion.”

She, with a blush, confessed it had not.

“Its never-failing effect in tranquilizing the mind would have been your reward, if you had fortunately recollected it,” Jane continued, with a sense of disappointment that the practical use did not seem to follow the conviction Ade-

laide herself had avowed to have derived from their late conversations. No experience of her own had led Jane to know how slow in forming a new habit is the mind, whose early discipline has been neglected. Trust in the efficacy of her beads, had, on the part of Adelaide, been relinquished, with other conventual puerilities, as her reflecting powers gained strength ; but no more rational practice had been substituted in their place till Lady Walbroke's summary process showed her how easily this matter might be settled ; and the subject being no otherwise brought forward in the Delmaine family, than, as we have already stated, by the practical observance of the Sabbath-day duties, its vast importance had never, till now, occupied her thoughts.

Jane having at length, in some degree, succeeded in calming her, they returned to the library, where Adelaide earnestly entreated the Doctor would inform her of every the most trifling circumstance of

Lady Delmaine's case, expressing, at the same time, some dissatisfaction with Julia for having deceived her in her statements of it. The Doctor, angered by the motive to which he attributed the enquiry, did not spare her in his representations. Again, giving way to a passion of tears, she exclaimed, "But what, for the love of Heaven, could be the cause of such dreadfully sudden danger? I believed the ravages of decline to be always gradual, and, when taken in time, cured by warmer climate."

"Aye," returned the Doctor; "but this is galloping consumption brought on by——"

Jane, ever on the watch for what might come out when he was in one of his cross unguarded humours, perceived the words she most feared his uttering, ready to rise to his lips, and interposed, by saying pointedly, "You know, in this unfortunate case, brother, there is a pre-disposition to consumptive complaints in the

family. Lady Delmaine's brother died of it at Lisbon."

"Right, Jane! — right! — glad you put me in mind! — might have let the cat out of the bag, 'faith! — and been sorry to do that, too!" These last two sentences were among his unfortunate "thinkings aloud," and caused his sister to change colour; but did not then make the impression she apprehended upon Adelaide, from her being but little conversant in English proverbs.

Turning soon after to Augustus, Adelaide said, "If, as I suppose, Mr. Stanmore, you address your bulletin to Julia, tell her I am too deeply grieved for Lady Delmaine's situation, and too angry at her hiding it from me, to be able to write to her at present. I am indeed altogether very unhappy!" And her tears streamed afresh.

Augustus was much affected, and became more confirmed in an idea which his imagination was beginning to cherish.

The free access he had to Adelaide was of course turned, as much as possible, to his own advantage, and the friendly frankness of her manner, arising from her full persuasion of his affections being now devoted to Julia, did not discourage his assiduity. In the case of this familiar intercourse he had become less cautious in guarding his secret; but her mind was too fully and painfully absorbed to attend to the change that was occasionally taking place in his manner. Jane, who saw it, purposely refrained from interfering, thinking nothing could be more desirable than that he should succeed in obtaining an interest in Adelaide's heart sufficient to counteract her present unfortunate predilection. Augustus was wholly ignorant, moreover, of the plea upon which Dr. Cosby had rested his interdiction to her entering Sir Arthur's apartment, so that her quiet submission, after her first forcible entry, might fairly enough be construed into an abatement

of interest. Thus encouraged, he began to give a loose to hopes the most unfounded, to interpret every chance word, every unintentional look, every assenting smile, in favour of the ecstatic vision afloat in his brain. , A state of delusion considerably increased by some circumstances of this day, — her alluding more than once to a supposed predilection for Julia, in something of a tone of displeasure against that heretofore dear friend, — her turning pale on his so eagerly perusing the report written by her — and yet — he knew not how to dare attribute such strong agitation to any feelings towards himself, — though, if it were not so, to what could he possibly ascribe her so strange and ill-contrived excuse of excess of alarm for Lady Delmaine at the very moment they were rejoicing in the account of her improvement ! — and the repeated recurrence to the same assertions, lest the true cause should be suspected. — Gods ! could she indeed be, —

he scarce dared whisper it to himself, — could she indeed experience a sensation of *jealousy*? — Impossible he should be so blessed! — but there was no other solution could be given, and his head became giddy with the transporting thought. Now then, he might at least so far disclose himself as to set her perfectly at ease in regard to his feeling any preference for Julia.

The opportunity soon presented itself. Word was brought to the Doctor that his patient was awake, and desired to see him, and Jane followed to await his return from the sick room, and explain to him the true reason of Adelaide's distress.

Thus left alone, Augustus with hurried trepidation began, "You accuse me, Mademoiselle d'Hauteroche, of corresponding with Julia, and——"

"Accuse you, Mr. Stanmore!" she reiterated with surprise, "surely it is very natural you should, — and no accusation at all."

“I beg pardon!” he replied, confounded at the absurd expression he had used; “I did not mean accused, — I only meant to say, you *suppose* I make my reports exclusively to Julia, which upon my honour is not the case.”

“I don’t know why you should not; I would think a lover very cool indeed, who let slip such an occasion for corresponding.”

“Lover!” cried Augustus, impetuously, and wholly thrown off his guard; “Good God! who can have so basely calumniated me to you? — Be assured, most adored of women, that never for an instant has my soul swerved from that perfect devotion to you—”

Adelaide deeply hurt for Julia, and highly offended for herself, precipitately arose, and interrupted him with, “This to *me*, Mr. Stanmore! who know so well — but such duplicity can never be forgiven! — we cease from this moment

all friendly intercourse between us!" — and she left the room.

Not more stupified at this burst of displeasure, and abrupt retreat, than at his own unaccountable deviation from all his prudent resolves, — a deviation, by no means unprecedented however, under the dominion of that inconsistent and overpowering tyrant, who can strike dumb the loquacious, and betray the would-be-dumb into unintentional speech, — he no sooner recovered from his surprise, than he removed himself out of the way of observation, till he should somewhat come to his senses. Under the deceptive influence which had filled his mind, he was not long, however, in again attributing what had occurred to the effects of jealous pique, rather stronger, indeed, than might have been expected, from sentiments so withheld as her's had till now been; but who could say how far so enthusiastic a disposition, as he knew her to possess,

might outstrip probability. One point was decidedly of the utmost moment, and that was to clear up the mistake with regard to Julia. For this, the friendly Jane would no doubt readily lend her assistance, and to her he would have recourse.

Jane assured him of her sincere interest in his cause, though she could by no means agree in his constructions of Adelaide's *actuating motive*, but she undertook to repeat, whatever he wished her to say, and enquire into her grounds for believing him to have swerved from his devotion to her.

Delicacy to the feelings of Julia forbade Adelaide's satisfying the enquiries Jane put to her upon the subject ; she only answered, that her information was certain, but she could not be explicit as to the quarter whence it originated, even to Jane — “As far, however, as regards me,” she added, “you know it cannot at all signify, if Julia were altogether

out of the question, I must feel greatly offended, at being again addressed in the language of passion, after my so decided rejection." And with this answer, Jane was fain to remain satisfied, for Adelaide would hear nothing more upon the subject.

Not so Augustus ; — his anxiety to clear himself but increased with the difficulty, and he now determined to write to Julia herself, along with the next bulletin : — which he accordingly did.

CHAP. X.

JULIA and Charlotte were in attendance by the side of their mothers' couch, when the letters were put into their hands. Julia blushed, as she recognised the writing, and saw it addressed particularly to herself, though she checked her impatience to open it till Charlotte should have communicated the report of her father's health. It was favourable, — but as Charlotte came to the end of it, the colour heightened in her cheek, — a glow of indignation overspread her countenance, and casting a reproachful glance upon her sister, — although unheeded by her whose eyes and thoughts were rivetted to the letter in her own hand, — she hastily put the bulletin into her pocket. — But the eye of Lady Del-

maine was full upon her in eager solicitude, for the contents of the report. "What is the matter, Charlotte?" she anxiously demanded. "You are concealing some bad news."

"Indeed, mamma," with evident embarrassment, "I have read you every word that relates to papa."

"Then it relates to Adelaide," she said with quickness.

Charlotte did not immediately answer.

The fact was, the mind of Augustus had remained so full of her image, after closing his letter to Julia, that he had, in finishing his bulletin, added, 'His happiness in the sanguine hopes that now began to be entertained of Mademoiselle d'Hauteroche's having escaped the contagion of the fever to which she had so incautiously exposed herself.' He was ignorant of Julia's having withheld, both from her mother and sister, all mention of a step she knew would be so obnoxious to censure, and he had

hitherto only refrained from adverting to the subject, because he could not set their fears at rest respecting it.

“ It — it — certainly relates to Adelaide,” at length hesitatingly replied Charlotte, in dread of the uneasiness the communication would give her mother ; “ but really I don’t quite understand it, — and — and — so I wanted an explanation from Julia before I troubled you about it.”

Julia’s attention was now painfully awakened. “ An explanation of what, Charlotte ?” she said.

“ Of an imprudence of your friend, if I must speak out, which Augustus alludes to, without specifying what it may be.”

Confused and agitated, Julia answered, “ Unless I see the allusion, I know not what explanation I can give.” Charlotte produced the bulletin, and her sister, casting her eye over it, continued, “ I did not mention Adelaide’s extreme an-

xiety for my father having induced her to go to Hawkwood, because I feared its making mamma uneasy ; but Mrs. Jane Cosby being there with her is at least a proof that there is nothing highly blameable in the risk to which she has exposed herself."

Lady Delmaine having calmly waited the issue of what was passing between the sisters, continued silent and abstracted for a considerable space of time. Julia remained gazing intently upon her mother's countenance, in expectation of some return to what she had said ; but none was made. At last, without reverting to what had occurred, she asked, " And who is the correspondent that brought so bright a tint into my Julia's usually pale cheek ?"

With the tint a good deal deepened, she replied, " The letter is from Augustus ; if you can spare me, mamma, I will take it to my own room ; it may give some farther information of Adelaide."

A slight motion of the head indicated ready assent ; and Julia withdrew, trembling with joyful anticipation.

Lady Delmaine then said, " I wish from my heart, Charlotte, you would check the asperity with which you taunt your sister on the subject of her friend."

" I cannot endure that Adelaide, mamma ; she is always doing such wrong things to distress you !"

" You greatly mistake that matter, my dear : but talking fatigues me, and I will reserve what I have to say till I hear whether your sister's letter brings any further elucidation of what has certainly rather surprised me."

And Lady Delmaine sunk back on her sofa in deep meditation.

In seeking the privacy of her own apartment for reading her letter, Julia was actuated by the wish to conceal the flutterings her heart forboded ; she now eagerly broke the seal, and found what follows : —

‘ Some malignant fiend has traduced
‘ me to Mademoiselle d’Hauteroche, and
‘ led her to believe me guilty of basely
‘ seeking to win your affections whilst
‘ professing myself devoted to her. To
‘ you then, dear Julia, I am compelled to
‘ have recourse, and most anxiously do I
‘ entreat you to justify me in the eyes of
‘ your friend, by the assurance which you
‘ alone can give her of my innocence.
‘ You who can bear me witness, that nei-
‘ ther by word nor look have I ever sought
‘ more from you than that sisterly kindness
‘ which, from our earliest years, I have
‘ ever experienced equally from Charlotte
‘ and yourself, and to both alike have re-
‘ turned with a brother’s regard. To this
‘ friendly feeling I confidently appeal, and
‘ to it shall I be indebted for the happiness
‘ of my life, if it prompt you to vindicate
‘ me to her who has been, from the first
‘ hour I beheld her, in possession of every
‘ faculty of my soul. Hasten then, dear

‘ girl, to clear me from this undeserved
‘ and cruel accusation, as you value my
‘ peace. ‘ Ever yours,

‘ A. S.’

That poor Julia did at length comprehend every word of this cruel epistle, the miserable state in which it finally left her but too well evinced, — though hours elapsed ere she did so. A film had, after the first few words, spread over her sight, and faintness over her heart, and she remained stupified till roused by the accidental entrance of Lady Delmaine’s woman, who, struck with her appearance, would have pressed some assistance upon her, which she resolutely rejected, requesting to be left to herself, and strictly prohibiting any alarm being communicated to her mother. — She once again resumed the distressing attempt to which her tears now formed the chief impediment, at the same time that their copious flow restored her to a consciousness of

what she was reading. — The best part of the morning having passed without bringing her back, Lady Delmaine became uneasy, and sent Charlotte to see what was the matter.

She found her sitting motionless, — the tears coursing in torrents down her face, apparently unperceived by herself. Excessively terrified, Charlotte wildly exclaimed, “Gracious goodness, Julia! what has happened? — Is it papa—?” and the dreadful idea her fright suggested choked her utterance.

“O no, no! nothing about papa,” she replied, recalled to some recollection by the anxious tone of her sister’s voice.

“What is it, then, for goodness sake, that so deeply distresses you, dear Julia? do tell me!” and she threw her arms about her sister.

“I’m sure I hardly know!” — scarce sensible of what she was saying.

“Something about Adelaide?”

“Yes; I believe so.”

“ Dearest sister, recollect yourself ! — tell me what ? — never will I reproach you about her again, — do, do confide in me, dear Julia ! ”

“ Take the letter to mamma, Charlotte ! ” a little recovering by her soothing ; “ she will see I cannot help being rather hurt, just at first. I will go down as soon as I am better. ”

“ Mayn’t I read it ? ”

“ To be sure ; you know I have no secrets from you. ”

“ Lie down then, dear Julia, and try to compose yourself ; I will bring you word what mamma says. ”

Lady Delmaine was indeed grieved and perplexed in the extreme, at this strange appeal. Julia had, with her promised openness, imparted her belief in the transfer of Augustus’s affections to herself, though without having been able, very accurately, to point out on what it rested ; in good part, as has been seen on the unfortunate misapprehension to which her

conviction of his having, long before, relinquished all thoughts of Adelaide, had given occasion. But Julia was so entirely exempt both from vanity and coquetry, that her mother had taken for granted she had good reason for what she said, and dwelt with much comfort on the fair prospect. Augustus's positive assertion of never having given the slightest cause for such an idea, was therefore equally amazing and distressing; but investigation was now out of the question; all that remained to be done was, to strengthen and support the fortitude of Julia to bear up under this severe disappointment. In this she hoped for the assistance of her new friend, Mr. Morecroft, to whom, on her own account, she felt every hour more deeply indebted. His exalted and enlightened views were rapidly shedding their beneficial influence over her mind, and taking place of the corroding feelings that had so fatally preyed there. The transitory nature of

earth's best joys, in contrast with the value and permanency of those now opening before her, was a theme he largely and frequently expatiated on ; and this common, but just argument, so plain to the understanding of piety, to the mind yet folded in with the mists of this world so difficult to receive, — urged as it was by his simple and impressive eloquence, — took strong possession of her thoughts and heart. She felt, as these became raised and enlarged, the gradual diffusion of a holy calm, the beginning of the peace which passeth not away ; but while the ties were thus fast loosening which too closely knit the soul to self, and that self to earth, it seemed as if the whole force of desire in her generous breast were turned to provide for the welfare of those she was leaving behind her, intent at once on securing to them the happiness in which their own dearest wishes would be accomplished, and more solicitous perhaps to extend it beyond the limits of this

sublunary scene. Could she but be certain of leaving them awakened to the deep sense of those divine truths, which experience was now teaching herself art able even to compensate our earthly felicity when withdrawn, it seemed as if the bitterest pangs of her departure would be taken away. To devise the means of effecting this was gradually becoming the chief object in her mind.

Hence arose another very serious consideration from this extraordinary letter. How was it that this required justification had become of consequence to Adelaide? Could *she* be wavering? — if so, unworthy indeed would she at last prove of the disinterested views so much of late in Lady Delmaine's contemplation, — this must be clearly understood, — the most likely means that offered seemed a communication with Jane Cosby.

Writing was no slight exertion, in the debilitated state and constantly recum-

bent posture of the poor invalid ; but deep interest will supply a momentary vigour, and she set about the task of obtaining the wished-for elucidation, with an appearance of strength that astonished and revived the hopes of Charlotte, on finding her thus employed when she returned from carrying back the letter with a soothing message to Julia. — Its purport had been, that she should not exert or hurry herself to resume her attendance on her mother, if the quiet of her own room was more congenial to her feelings ; — she did not wonder at her present distress, but trusted, when she was able to come down stairs, she might offer suggestions calculated to soften it. Not speedily, indeed, was Julia able to seek the proposed consolation. She became so very unwell as to call for a division of Charlotte's assiduous care between her and Lady Delmaine. Still, unable as she was, she would not delay complying with the desire of Augustus, and the

following day wrote to Adelaide, inclosing his letter. Her's ran thus : —

‘ O, Adelaide ! dearest friend ! — read
 ‘ the inclosed, and think how very
 ‘ wretched I am ! — To have so cruelly
 ‘ deceived myself, and be stigmatized as
 ‘ a malignant fiend ! Dreadful imputa-
 ‘ tion ! for too surely it is I only who have
 ‘ led you to the belief that makes him so
 ‘ unhappy. Vain, silly creature that I
 ‘ was, to think I could ever succeed to
 ‘ your place in his heart ! Severely and
 ‘ deservedly am I punished. Here, then,
 ‘ I entirely exonerate him from any in-
 ‘ tention of exciting the folly I have so
 ‘ weakly fallen into ; but, oh, let him not
 ‘ surmise its existence in my breast ! —
 ‘ Never, never could I again venture to
 ‘ look up in his presence ! — And how
 ‘ you came to tax him with it, I cannot
 ‘ conjecture ! I mean no reproach : but
 ‘ is it possible, that this so anxiously-
 ‘ sought justification gives him a prospect
 ‘ of gaining your favour ? I hope I shall

‘ nèver repine at two I so dearly love
‘ being happy in each other, but ardently
‘ do I pray I may not live to see it!

‘ Your most miserable,

‘ JULIA.’

Adelaide was cut to the heart, on receiving this letter. Too well she knew what agony of mind had dictated it, and severely did she reproach herself for the unguarded allusions that had led to it.— She instantly determined upon a full explanation with Augustus, and sought Jane for the purpose of requesting her to be present.

She then began by expressing to her unfortunate lover, her astonishment at his indelicate appeal to Julia, “upon a subject,” she said, “that could be of no consequence to *me* in any way whatever, — though, as you, Sir, seem to set such value upon proving yourself insensible to charms any other man would glory in paying homage to, I will so far satisfy

your wish, as to assure you, that my friend exonerates you in the fullest manner from ever having shown the slightest signs of preference of any kind for her. — It is, however, the extreme importance you seem to attach to standing acquitted to me on this head, that has obliged me to seek this conversation, Mr. Staumore. I am very averse to giving pain, and I hoped my former explicitness must have put an end, long ago, to any I had had the misfortune to occasion you. In this confidence, I gave way, in my correspondence with Madame de Montménil, to the expressions of esteem you are entitled to inspire, and am grieved to find they have been misinterpreted by you into an encouragement to renew addresses, to which I never can make any other return, than a grateful acknowledgment of the honour they do me. In your friendship I should have felt gratified ; but since that cannot be cultivated, without keeping alive

sentiments, which I repeat, from the strongest conviction, *I never can return*, I am under the painful necessity of relinquishing all, but the most distant intercourse of civility, while our respective situations in this family continue unavoidably to throw us into each other's way."

This long *tirade* was not all uttered in a breath, but interrupted by many an attempt at deprecation, — supplication, — vindication, &c. on the part of Augustus, which the reader may so easily suppose, that it has appeared unnecessary to lengthen the narrative by their insertion : suffice it to say, that the conversation ended in the most submissive protestations of never offending more, but without his being able to obtain any mitigation of the award that they were henceforth to be 'better strangers.'

CHAP. XI.

THE same day which brought the letter from Julia, also brought Lady Delmaine's confidential appeal to Jane Cosby. It could not have been more fortunately timed. The dignified propriety with which Adelaide had acquitted herself, in the conversation with Augustus, had greatly enhanced Jane's opinion of her. She bore testimony with full confidence to *her* being perfectly blameless, in regard to him, — and dwelt with some complacency on her obedient submission to Dr. Cosby's prohibition against entering the sick room; — nor did she fail, either, to impart the pleasure with which she observed the more serious turn her young friend's mind seemed to be taking: — in which last circumstance,

however, the modest Jane carefully suppressed her own share.

Many days now passed without producing much change. Augustus looked, and was, wretched. Adelaide, as the fears of her having taken the infection abated, became impatiently urgent for admission to Sir Arthur, which Jane warded off as she best could.

Slow, to an extraordinary degree, was the progress of Sir Arthur's convalescence, miserably retarded by irrepressible mental anxiety. On recovering to a consciousness of what was passing around him, he had shown surprise at the absence of his wife and daughters, and had been told that the nature of his complaint obliged the Doctor to interdict their attendance. This plea could not long hold good after the malady had subsided. Upon his urging that the objection was now past, and testifying impatience to see them, it was alleged that the Doctor had advised a little

change of air for Lady Delmaine: — that her daughters had accompanied her, and the Doctor was unwilling to hasten her return, while she could as yet only see her husband at such short intervals. This answered for a few days more; but growing at length suspicious of some concealment, and expressing his doubt of the truth of the reasons assigned, it became necessary to acknowledge her being gone to Bristol. He instantly took the alarm, — for which, indeed, there was but too much cause, — and the effect upon his mind was quickly apparent, in the impediment it threw in the way of his recovery. Full well he knew that no slight suffering would have taken Lady Delmaine from him while he was dangerously ill. Dr. Cosby insisted in vain on the compulsion he had used to force her from home. No compulsion, he was sure, would have availed, save what arose from extremity of illness; and his anguish, — deepened by recurrence to the idea of his own culpability, that had

so materially contributed to her illness, — became intolerable. His eagerness to put himself forward, but kept him back. He sat up too long : — he forced down food for which he had no appetite : — his impatient query of the apothecary every morning, — how soon he should be fit to travel ? — regularly produced a disappointing answer, that irritated and brought on nervous spasms without end. Once only had he allowed himself to ask Augustus after Adelaide, and seemed satisfied with being told she was with Mrs. Jane Cosby.

He had, however, got the length of being able to attend to some trifling matters of business ; such as looking over papers, &c. when he one morning, desired Augustus to bring him a parcel, deposited in an India cabinet placed in the closet within his dressing-room. With this closet Augustus was but little acquainted, — with its contents still less. In describing the cabinet, Sir Arthur had not particularly mentioned its situ-

ation, and the description answering accurately to the one in Lady Delmaine's dressing-room,—to which it was, 'in fact, the fellow, — Augustus, unhesitatingly, repaired 'to that, and the unfortunate parcel of mischievous documents supplied by Lady Barbara for her niece's edification, being the only one tied with a red tape, as Sir Arthur had specified the papers he wanted to be, it appeared plain that these were what he had come to look for. Augustus took them, accordingly, to Sir Arthur, and laying them down on the table by him, till he should be at leisure to examine them, retired to the window with his book.

“What, in the name of wonder, is this you have brought me?” he exclaimed, in surprise, as his eye fell upon the parcel. “Where did you light on this?”

“It was the only thing in Lady Delmaine's cabinet that looked at all like what you described.”

“ Lady Delmaine’s cabinet ! — Heavenly powers ! what a discovery has your mistake produced ! Lady Barbara’s hand, and Adelaide’s name every second or third line ! Here’s mischief afloat with a vengeance ! ” and cutting the string, he eagerly began to read. “ Fiend ! — Devil incarnate ! ” broke from him, as he went on, working himself up to agony, in the persuasion that his unhappy wife had here imbibed the seeds of the deadly poison that was destroying her. “ Too plain, indeed, is now the cause ; but still it may not be too late to obviate the fatal effects, if I could convince her — ” tossing the papers distractedly from him. “ Augustus ! may I rely upon your assistance ? ”

“ Can you doubt it ? What is there I would not do to ease you from the distress I see, without being able to comprehend,” said Augustus, exceedingly alarmed at the agitation, of which he had so unluckily been the cause.

"Then, we set off together for Bristol to-morrow morning?"

"Heaven forbid!" returned Augustus, fervently; "your strength is wholly inadequate as yet to such an undertaking."

"If I die in the attempt, you'll bear me witness, it is to restore her peace of mind I make it."

Augustus saw that remonstrance would at this moment be ineffectual, and judiciously refrained; looking forward to the more powerful interference of Dr. Cosby, who was expected in the course of the day. In the meantime, with the hope of alleviating in some degree the distress he witnessed, by sharing it, he affectionately pressed for a communication of the cause, and was shocked enough when he read the cruel exaggerations and misinterpretations so dexterously interwoven with facts, as to give a specious consistency to the statements, sufficient to have conveyed the idea of an intrigue carried to the most

criminal length. — The misery of having such suspicions awakened, Lady Delmaine had escaped, by her prudent refraining from the perusal of the papers.

Dr. Cosby soon arrived ; and, instantly struck with the flushed check, and agitated look of his patient, bluntly exclaimed, “ What the plague’s in the wind now ? — what’s the matter here ? ”

“ Matter enough, Doctor, to determine me to set off for Bristol to-morrow morning.”

“ The man’s cracked, upon my soul ! hey ! what ? — Why you are just as fit to embark for the north pole ! ”

“ The question is not what I may be fit for, but what I am called upon to do, to save the life of the inestimable woman, who is sinking a victim to the most atrocious calumny.”

“ And will the risking yours, recover her, do you think ? — By all that’s good, if you don’t desist from this mad scheme.

I must have a strait waistcoat prepared for you!"

"My good Doctor!" returned Sir Arthur, resolutely, "I have been too long acquainted with your friendly zeal to take exception at it now; but, I tell you fairly, that opposition is vain. — I *feel* what I *ought* to do, — and do it I *will* at all risks."

"Can't you at least be satisfied to send an ambassador for the present?" replied the Doctor, in a milder tone, finding his blustering did not answer. "Here's Mr. Stanmore! give him credentials to any extent of confidential communication that may quiet your lady's mind, and in another week, you will probably be able to undertake the journey at a less hazard."

"No, Doctor," firmly; "for the unfortunate passion I cannot conquer, I owe her every possible atonement: — she has, it here seems," pointing to the papers before him, "been tortured into a con-

viction of a turpitude of conduct on my part, of which I am utterly incapable ; from this I can thoroughly justify myself, and nothing shall prevent me !”

“ Whew !” returned the Doctor, with one of his long whistles ; “ Wilful against Wise for ever ! by G—,” striding about the room. “ What the devil’s to be done, Mr. Stanmore ?”

“ I will submit to every precaution you shall suggest,” Sir Arthur continued. “ Sleep as many nights on the road as you may direct ; —but this very day I write her word I am coming, and for what purpose, —and no earthly power shall prevent me !”

“ Absolute insanity, upon my soul ! in a man that can’t to this hour sit up half the day !” vociferated the Doctor ; “ and most likely too late to do good after all !”

Augustus cast a glance of terror at the inconsiderate speaker.

“ What, Doctor ? — what said you ? —

that would drive me mad indeed ! — too late said you ?” — staring wildly at him.

“ Surely, never too late, Doctor ?” interposed Augustus, wishing to affix a different meaning to the words, — “ surely, never too late for a woman of Lady Delmaine’s sense to hear reason !”

The Doctor, confused at finding by Sir Arthur’s dismay what he had dropped, remained silent, and the invalid apparently satisfied he had misapprehended the observation, took up his pen, and began his letter, desiring Augustus to put down in writing, what Dr. Cosby directed to be done on the journey, and there the contest rested.

When the Doctor and Augustus left the patient, they repaired to Jane for a consultation on the possible resources for parrying this unforeseen wrongheadedness, as they deemed it ; but none suggested themselves : and Jane took very serious additional alarm lest any thing should transpire to betray the matter to

Adelaide, whose enterprising spirit might again fall upon some device for obtaining an interview, of which the consequences to Sir Arthur could scarcely be calculated, alive as he was to the dread of exposing her to the censure of the world, and ignorant as he had on this occasion been fortunately kept, of how wilfully she had drawn it upon her.

The Manor-house was a scrambling old mansion, built round an inner court, as in the time of Queen Elizabeth, abounding in various and excellent apartments, but so detached and distinct from each other, as might keep the inhabitants of one part perfectly in the dark as to what was passing in another. Upon the first indication of Sir Arthur's complaint, he had been removed to a distant quarter from that occupied by the female part of the family. This circumstance afforded reasonable grounds of expectation, that, since there seemed to be no chance of his relinquishing his plan, it might, at least,

be effected without the previous discovery of it by Adelaide. Her bedroom, however, had one of its windows to the front entrance court ; and from this, at an early hour of the morning, she had caught a casual glimpse of a travelling-carriage at the door, and things putting into it ; but concluding it could relate only to Augustus, and, rather pleased with the prospect of his absence from the painful constraint in their intercourse since the last explanation, she paid little attention to what was going forward. Jane had made an ineffectual attempt to draw her away to the breakfast-parlour, which fronted the other way ; but, intent upon finishing something she was reading, she had delayed obeying the summons.

She now, however, rose to go ; but, in passing the window, she perceived the carriage-door held open, and at the same moment her guardian lifted into it — received by Augustus — the door shut : — and the carriage drove off.

Uttering a cry the most piteous, and stretching forth her arms, as if to arrest him, she stood like one transfixed.

Jane, who had been upon the watch, and heard the lamentable scream, instantly flew to her; and, terrified with the wildness of her air, caught her to her breast with soothing tones; but they were not soon attended to; at length, with a burst of agony, she sobbed out —

“There wanted but this to complete my misery! — I have driven him from his home! — he would risk to die rather than admit my presence! — Wretched, wretched Adelaide! Send after him; I will, this instant, leave the house! — Oh, take me, take me away! let me not be the cause of his death also! Oh, pitying Heaven, what can I do? — where can I go? — unhappy outcast that I am!”

Jane, much affected, suffered her to proceed in this strain for some time, hoping that tears might at length follow, but her eye remained dry, and her look

wild. Seeking to calm her, Jane now asserted, in the most positive terms, that she had no share whatever in her guardian's departure, and that it was occasioned solely by his discovery of the dangerous state of his wife. —

“ And I again proscribed, and left behind. — Does not every thing show how just the fears which you have lately been combating? — Too surely *I* am the wretched cause of all!” .

“ Dear Adelaide, you forget that he knew nothing of your being here; — how then could he possibly have thought of taking you with him?”

This seemed for the moment somewhat to pacify her. She had latterly been a prey to frequent misgivings on the origin of Lady Delmaine's indisposition, which Jane, ever averse to inflicting unnecessary pain, had endeavoured to allay, but not successfully. Adelaide had been struck with Jane's interposition to check what the Doctor had called ‘letting the cat out

of the bag,' and had eagerly sought an explanation of the adage. The elucidation given her led her thoughts into a train of agitating conjecture from which it had since become difficult to divert them. The same distressing conjectures had, in this instance, forcibly recurred. She gave way, however, in some degree, to the soothing of her friend ; but sunk into melancholy and deep abstraction, apparently revolving some important step

An occurrence of the subsequent day precipitated her determination.

The following letter was put into her hand : —

‘ Pursue your triumphant career, Mademoiselle d’Hauteroche ; its success is likely to be commensurate to the lofty daring of your Machiavellian powers. No home-bred genius could have devised so comprehensive a plan. It was not enough that your insidious wiles should alienate the husband’s affection.

‘ from a fond wife, and thereby break
‘ her heart; but she must be sent to die
‘ at a distance, and make room for you
‘ to watch over the faithless sick man’s
‘ couch, and thus ensure from his grati-
‘ tude the future remuneration his love
‘ might perchance have fallen short in
‘ suggesting. This was indeed a stroke
‘ of policy to immortalize your name !
‘ Continue to set the world at defiance,
‘ and there can be little doubt of your
‘ reaching the goal. What, though the
‘ friends of virtue and decorum should
‘ shrink from your contaminating inter-
‘ course, enough will still be found to
‘ cringe to rank and wealth, although
‘ profligacy should chance to be their
‘ attendant.

‘ If haply, however, one spark of
‘ honour linger in your breast, (and in
‘ one so young it can scarce be wholly
‘ extinct,) let an appeal to your better
‘ feelings not prove altogether ineffec-
‘ tual, but fan it into activity sufficient

‘ to prompt your immediate resort to the
‘ death-bed of your victim, there to
‘ atone for your nefarious proceedings,
‘ (with every part of which rest assured
‘ she has been made fully acquainted,)
‘ by abjuring the odious purpose of
‘ usurping her place: for — “she loved
‘ thee, cruel girl!” and this has given the
‘ keenest edge to the fatal weapon that
‘ destroys her. It may yet rest with your
‘ compunction, if not to recal the fleeting
‘ spirit, at least to soften down the pangs
‘ of her departing hour. Therefore “as-
‘ sume a virtue if you have it not,” and
‘ you may see cause to thank — however
‘ harsh you may deem the admonition —

‘ A FRIEND TO VIRTUE AND MORALITY.’

Adelaide’s fortitude held out to the end of this bitter epistle, but it then gave way. She held her head with both hand ; it throbbed as if to bursting ; her brain turned round, and, with a heavy, mournful groan, she sank back in the sofa, on which she was sitting.

Jane had been employed in a distant part of the room, with her back to her, and was now first aware of her situation. She flew in terror to her assistance ; but she appeared insensible of any thing that could be said or done. The paper that had caused the mischief was lying by her : perceiving it to be Lady Barbara's writing, Jane felt no scruple in reading it. Great, as may be supposed, was her indignation. " Heaven defend the cause of virtue and morality from such ill-judging friends !" she mentally ejaculated. " Enough were such mistimed severity to scare an unfortunate waverer into treading the more alluring forbidden path ! Here will this innocent romancer, with her warm affections, undisciplined mind, and unconsciousness of evil, be nearly driven out of her senses by these calumnious misconstructions !"

For these reflections, and many more, there was full leisure, from the long continuance of Adelaide's stupor ; a

slight pressure of the hand, however, at length gave evidence that she was becoming sensible who held it, when Jane renewed her hitherto vain endeavours to induce her to take some restoring drops ; but, putting them from her, the unhappy girl exclaimed, “ Sooner, much sooner, would I accept the means to die ! Oh, why could I not catch the disorder ! — *I break her heart ! — I fly to her !* — Sooner would I fly to the most remote corner of the globe, to avoid obtruding my hateful presence into her sight ! Well may she proscribe me from it, if she believe the smallest part of these barbarous allegations ! — Take me away, dear Jane, never again to cross this threshold ! — And here I make the solemn vow — ” sinking upon her knees.

“ Hush, hush ! ” cried Jane, putting her hand on her mouth, “ I will hear no rash solemn vow ! — rather, pray to the Giver of all good for strength and guidance, and refrain from hasty resolves, I most earnestly entreat you ! ”

“ I believe, indeed, my head is not fit for resolves ; — it feels bound with such a tight cord, and beats so very hard — I cannot think at all ! — but, oh ! how very wretched ! — What can have happened ? — Have I been guilty of some shocking wickedness ? — I can no longer breathe here, — so dreadfully oppressed ! — Take me away, dear Jane ! — will you not take me away ? ” —

Jane, really terrified for her senses, used the most earnest entreaties for her taking a composing draught, in which she finally succeeded ; and, darkening the room, left her, in the hope that quiet might somewhat calm her harassed spirit ; and she forthwith proceeded to despatch a messenger for her brother.

On stealing softly back into the room, it was with some satisfaction she beheld the poor girl on her knees ; starting up, however, precipitately, she wildly exclaimed, “ I have done something so wicked I dare not pray, — and Harry is

not here to pray for me ! — Do take me to him, dear Jane.”

“ I mean to do so,” she replied ; “ meanwhile I’ll supply his place, if you will join me,” kneeling down by her, and offering up a fervent ejaculation for the recovery of her peace ; — but peace there was, as yet, none for the fearfully agitated Adelaide. She continued wholly incoherent until the arrival of Dr. Cosby, who administered a far more powerful opiate than his sister had ventured upon. This produced its effect. After several hours she awoke more collected, though not less unhappy ; and clinging unceasingly to the miserable conviction of being guilty of Lady Delmaine’s death, with an intenseness no arguments could assuage.

On the following morning they took her with them to the Grange.

man Sir

pas-

CHAP. XII.

MEANWHILE Sir Arthur was in slow progression pursuing his journey to Bristol, guarded by the assiduous attention of his young companion from every inconvenience that could be foreseen and obviated on the road. Supported also by the consciousness that he was doing something towards the tranquillising of his wife's mind, and ignorant how desperate every chance of her recovery was, he accomplished his journey without any material check to his convalescence.

It would require far other powers than those exemplified in these simple pages to afford an adequate representation of the affecting scene that ensued upon his arrival, — an outline only can be it.

for the imagination of the not here to fill up *ad libitum*.

The shock that nearly overpowered the faculties of Sir Arthur, on beholding the emaciated and hopeless condition of his wife, now only supported by pillows as she sat up in bed, and wholly unable to leave it, — the placid satisfaction, amounting almost to serenity, portrayed in the countenance of Lady Delmaine on once more beholding that form so dear, — the anguished agitation of the two poor girls, who, to judge from their father's appearance, saw reason to dread being shortly bereaved of both their parents, — the tender and heart-rending expressions that were uttered in broken sentences, — so affecting in their reality, so poor in the description, — cannot here be done justice to.

The first coherent sentence came from Lady Delmaine. “And where is my poor Adelaide?” said she. “Have you not brought her with you?”

There wanted but this to unman Sir Arthur altogether: bursting into a passion of tears, and concealing his face on the bed, by the side of which he was kneeling, "My God! my God!" he exclaimed, "there is no bearing this! — and in that tone of kindness too!"

"What mean you, love? — why this distress? — Could you doubt my doing justice to her pure and guileless nature? — it wholly exonerates her in my eyes from all imputed blame! — But, bring her to me! — I long to set her at rest, by telling her how from my heart I acquit her."

"Exalted, — incomparable woman! — is it in human nature to be capable of such generous sentiments?"

"Spare your praise, Arthur! this is not the hour for pride, even though the panegyrist be a too fondly beloved husband!"

"Too fondly! — Oh Matilda! the reproach implied in that expression cuts to my very soul!"

“I spoke it not in reproach of *you*, dearest ! — to myself only it could apply, who, in so many years of uninterrupted felicity unpardonably put the creature in the room of the Creator, from whom my blessing flowed. Had it been my fortune to meet earlier with the invaluable man, who has now opened my eyes to my highest duties, I might possibly have been saved from sinking under the severe trial which for want of timely resignation has overwhelmed me. — But I have much to say, — more perhaps than of time to say it in, — and it greatly imports that Adelaide be present, — so let me see her, love, without delay.”

“Dearest Matilda, she is not here.”

“Not here ! — Could you conceive me so cruel as to wish her left behind ?”

“Could I have believed it possible to any earthly being to rise so superior to the calumnious details so maliciously forced upon your attention, I——”

“What details ?”

“The cruel and unfounded imputations of Lady Barbara, which chance brought to my knowledge, and which have almost driven me out of my senses.”

“Not one word of them have I read, believe me!”

“It was from *your* India cabinet, to which Augustus went by mistake, they were brought me!”

“This explains what I did not understand in your letter; and much blame I deserve for having neglected, in the hurry of leaving home, to destroy them; but I too well knew how irritating they were likely to be ever to suffer myself to read them.”

“You! deserve blame?—no words can do justice to your magnanimity, Matilda!”

“You greatly overrate my deserts, Arthur. If I could make you sensible of the vast difference with which worldly objects strike upon a mind verging on the confines of eternity, you would be

aware, that what you dignify by such high-sounding epithets, must simply be resolved into a true appreciation of the soul's best interests, before which the concerns of this life are but as dust in the balance."

"O, Matilda! I cannot bear to hear you speak thus slightly of husband and children!—Heaven is my witness, that if the laying down my life, could avert the doom from you, I should not hesitate an instant."

"I entirely credit the assertion, for I have seen your honest, though ineffectual, struggle against the thralldom of passion, and did but grieve the more heavily at my own want of power to retain so valuable and valued a heart. But *now*, Arthur, — now that I have learnt to estimate this world and the next at their just value, — now that my pious monitor encourages me to consider the grave but as the portal of a blessed immortality, I would not, if I could, recede from the

approaching termination of earthly cares, and the prospect that opens to me of future happiness, well assured as I also am; that I shall still leave the beloved of my soul to a greater portion of felicity here than I have ever had the power to bestow;—and 'tis to ensure this I am so anxious to see Adelaide. Write to her, Julia, to set off without delay, and travel with all speed."

Sir Arthur wept like a child, and was unable to articulate a word. The two poor girls were also dissolved in tears, whilst the dying Christian maintained the most perfect equanimity. Finding herself, however, exhausted, she closed her eyes, and motioned to have her pillows removed, and be laid down.

Julia now anxiously entreated her father to take some rest likewise, and leaving Charlotte with Lady Delmaine, to suffer her to conduct him to his room. Here they found Augustus Stanmore carefully attending to all the minutiae of

arrangement for the comfort and accommodation of his friend. Eagerly seizing both her hands the moment he perceived her, "Dear Julia, a thousand thanks!" he said, with considerable emotion, "for your so immediate compliance with my request. But alas, alas! all hope is over! — though I have much to tell you, if you can find patience to listen."

Julia, not at all prepared to meet with him there, was thrown into visible confusion, and answered she knew not what. It passed unobserved as the natural effect of her very agitated state respecting her mother, and she made an immediate retreat.

More of consolation in regard to Augustus had made its way to her mind than, in the fulness of her present cares for both her parents, she was herself aware of. Adelaide, deeply feeling for the unhappiness expressed in her letter had dismissed every previous sensation of displeasure from her thoughts, and sought to

soothe her in the most endearing terms that friendship could suggest. But the most healing specific of all probably was found in these words: 'Rest assured
' that I have now put a decisive and final
' end to all thoughts of me in the heart of
' Mr. Stanmore.' More than once had the eyes of Julia unconsciously reverted to that little paragraph: she drew no conclusions from it, — humility forbid! — only there was some comfort in thinking poor Augustus would no longer be kept on the rack of suspense; and thus, sympathising with the relief he would experience, she felt some satisfaction, — since she could not hope for his love, — in the affectionate proposal of making her his confidential friend.

She now proceeded to despatch the letter to Adelaide, as her mother had directed: it was written in the most pressing terms, but did not reach its destination so speedily as could have been wished.

The conscience-stricken Platonist was now giving way to a dejection that baffled all the persuasions of her friends. Jane had, in some unintentional expression of Lady Delmaine's letter, believed she detected the generous purpose of the writer : and though she by no means felt at liberty to forestal it, was doubly solicitous, from this circumstance, to restore the poor penitent to some internal peace, and prepare her for supporting the full tide of felicity which seemed to be in store for her, and might else prove almost too much for her senses. She stated strongly to Adelaide the internal evidence, "that this cruel letter had originated solely with Lady Barbara,—that the accusations were evident exaggerations of what she herself credited, — that, at all events, there were no grounds for supposing such atrocious calumnies to have spread or gained belief in the world."

"This is my world!" interrupted the wretched girl, striking her breast; "here

I stand accused, and nothing can acquit me!" And vain was the attempt to soften her distracted wailings. Her eyes were completely opened to the mischief she had done, however innocent her intention — if, indeed, ~~that~~ ^{such} intention could ever be deemed innocent which involved such dreadful consequences! "Fatal, fatal delusion! reckless selfish creature that she was! Had not the dear, injured, excellent woman, whose death was imputed to her, — and oh, perhaps with too much cause! — had she not admonished her? — had she not said a criminal intrigue were in her eye a less offence than the alienation of his best affections? — And yet, unfeeling that I was! I still persisted in seeking to obtain them. — Did I even continue to deceive myself in the meaning of his letter? — O no, no! too well I understood it, and laid it to my heart, and cherished the wicked hope, if I could but get back under his roof, of becoming all to him that he was to me! — and would not that

have excluded his unhappy wife from his best affections? — too surely it must ! And when I knew her health declining, I hardened myself even against belief in it, so far from seeking to investigate the cause ! — and now it ^{burst} upon me in the dreadful conviction of being — her murderer ! — Father of Mercies ! dare I ever look to be forgiven ? — can I ever forgive myself ? — never ! never ! — wretched for evermore !”

From these remorseful incessant retrospections, and too well-founded self-upbraidings, one single idea came to take possession of her mind, and that was, an eager desire to be removed from every person and thing connected with the Delmaine family. For this purpose, the Oldhams occurred to her thoughts. Some friendly intercourse had taken place by letter since their return : a strong wish for a visit from Adelaide had been more than once expressed, which she had not only resisted, but sedulously

avoided imparting, lest her guardian should have made it a plea for again sending her from him. She now informed Jane of the proposal, and her positive intention to avail herself of it.

Jane, fully prepossessed with the expectation of a summons from Bristol, combated the plan with every possible argument. All she could obtain was Adelaide's awaiting the answer to a letter she had written to acquaint her friends with her purpose. This delay, however, gave time for the arrival of Julia's urgent petition for her immediate and rapid journey to the Hot Wells. It particularly and forcibly stated Lady Delmaine's generous impatience to press her to her heart, whilst power was yet left her to do so,—the letter was written in terms of the warmest friendship, and deepest affliction, and went nearly to destroy the small remains of reason Adelaide could still command.

Of all the arduous struggles Jane had

hitherto had with her, this seemed the most hopeless. The bare suggestion of appearing in Lady Delmaine's presence, drew from her screams of terror, — and in similar wild opposition to whatever could be urged, without even attempting a rational reply, — was the remainder of the day passed, on which the letter (already delayed by having been directed to Hawkwood, and the awkward bearings of cross post) had come to hand.

All the infantine caresses and artless arts of little Harry had, since Adelaide's return to the Grange, failed in obtaining their former share in her notice ; and the affectionate child seemed drooping under the sense of his own loss of favour, and her unmitigated distress. On this evening he had come to wish her good-night, with his cheeks already wet with tears, and he again fell a crying as he kissed her. This caught her attention, — “What is the matter, Harry ?” she asked.

“I don't know, — every body is so unhappy, it makes me cry.”

“Who is unhappy besides me, Harry?”

“Why, dear mamma Jane, — she has been crying so, — and I heard her say to uncle Cosby, it was your fault.”

“My fault, Harry? — dear good Jane! — if it is for my fault she cries, she has much cause indeed!”

“Then, if you know your fault, why don’t you mend? — Mamma Jane says, you don’t love her no more, — and won’t believe what she tells you, — and won’t do what she desires you. — Are you indeed so naughty? — why are you?”

Adelaide, much struck with this simple exposition of the pain she was giving to so kind a friend, — having been latterly wholly engrossed by her own miserable feelings, — now suddenly started at this appeal to her generosity, and warmly exclaimed, “*She* at least shall have no cause for reproaching me! — I will go to her directly, Harry, and do whatever she pleases.”

The delighted boy clapped his hands

in joy. "Now, now indeed, I do see God Almighty has minded my prayers again!" he cried. "I have begged so hard, he would make you good again ; — now, indeed, you are my own dear pretty Addy ! — You was so sadly altered, — it made me so very sorry."

Considerably softened and affected, she repaired to the Doctor's library, where the child said he had left them, and where, sure enough, she found Jane, with tears of vexation still straying down her face, stating to her brother all the distressing results she foresaw from the utter impracticability she had met with.

Throwing her arms about this zealous friend, Adelaide passionately exclaimed, "Forgive, forgive me, I beseech you, for afflicting you ! I thought only of myself in the severe trial proposed to me, — and felt I would sooner die ; — but you, at least, shall not find me ungrateful ;

— I will do your pleasure, if it cost me my life,—it will be but due atonement.”

Overjoyed with this unexpected concession, Jane fervently clasped her to her breast, unable to find ready utterance for her satisfaction, which, however, soon broke forth in affectionate acknowledgments, and revolvings of the most effectual means of proceeding with all the speed the still delicate state of Adelaide's health could admit of. This discussion bringing her back to a renewal of all the terrors she had before experienced, for what she had now bound herself to do, Adelaide turned deadly pale and heart sick. Every encouragement her friends could suggest was offered; they would both accompany her, and assist her through the arduous task in every possible way,—they even ventured to hint, that so far from having any reproaches to fear, excess of kindness might be the most overpowering thing she had to prepare for encountering.

More than this they dared not say, and as well might this have been spared for any effect it produced. She had shrunk back into her own miserable cogitations, and become wholly regardless of what they said.

So many days had been lost by unavoidable delays, and the life of Lady Delmaine seemed now so very precarious, that the earliest hour in which Adelaide could be ready to set out next morning, was fixed on, and the speed of four horses must compensate as much as might be, for stopping to sleep a night upon the road ; a precaution deemed absolutely necessary to afford her any chance of supporting the trying scene that awaited her.

To give an idea of what that scene may prove, it will be requisite to revert to the few days which followed Sir Arthur's arrival at Bristol.

CHAP. XIII.

LADY Delmaine was too deeply impressed with the importance of her few remaining hours to be dilatory in introducing Mr. Morecroft to Sir Arthur. — Julia and Charlotte were already conscious of the advantage they were obtaining from such enlightened intercourse. Charlotte's asperities were softening, and Julia's virtues acquiring a firmer basis than they had hitherto rested on. — and grateful was the conviction to the heart of the pious sufferer! — But, Sir Arthur and Adelaide still occupied her most anxious thoughts. Mr. Morecroft was consequently appointed for the earliest moment of the day following that of Sir Arthur's arrival, at which he was likely to be visible, and impatiently did she look for their meeting.

No sooner did her husband take his seat in the great arm-chair by her bedside, than she began to speak on the momentous subject. Sir Arthur, whose religious opinions were on a par with those of ninety-nine out of a hundred, esteemed by the world as mighty good sort of people, — who, like them, professed a great objection to being ‘righteous overmuch,’ — and, like them, also, was wholly unconscious of his own deficiency, — was considerably startled at the deep seriousness with which his wife entered upon the topic. He strongly expressed his fears of her having been drawn into the vortex of sectaries, now so unfortunately abounding, as to induce the worldly-minded to affix the stigma of *enthusiasm* to all those whose properly-directed sense of the great object of their creation, leads them to place their religious duties before every other.

Lady Delmaine, with a placid smile, referred him to Mr. Morecroft, to quiet

his apprehensions on that head," Sir Arthur rather dreaded such a conference; but in his wife's present state to show reluctance in complying with any of her wishes was out of the question, so he submitted, and shortly after Mr. Morecroft came.

His appearance bespoke his mind; every lineament of his benevolent countenance breathing the mild gospel spirit that inspired his thoughts, alike remote from luke-warmness and intemperate zeal.

For an exterior so eminently prepossessing, combined with a manner so unassuming and truly gentlemanlike, Sir Arthur was not prepared, and the impression was instantaneous and powerful. Lady Delmaine watched for and delightedly hailed it, as an earnest of the full fruition of all she still had at heart. She was not slow in turning the conversation to the topic, which would set her husband's fears of her having been drawn by her new instructor beyond the measure

of sober and rational, though fervid piety, entirely at rest. Sir Arthur listened with unfeigned interest and increasing admiration, and from that day became eager to improve every opportunity of seeing and knowing more of the worthy divine, who, on his part, was assiduous to let none slip which he could pass by Lady Delmaine's bed-side, painfully aware how brief her moments now promised to be.

On being left to themselves a deeply-affecting conversation took place between the husband and wife, in which she disclosed to him every disinterested purpose of her exalted soul, relative to himself and Adelaide, in a strain the most difficult to bear from its overwhelming tenderness, each expression of which struck like a dagger to his heart, calling forth the severest self-accusations, only the more felt the more she endeavoured to assuage them. "And believe me, love!" she concluded with saying, "if it could be given to my choice to retrace my steps

in this world of trouble and care, I would not now accept the alternative, knowing, as I do, that I leave you to happiness ; — And for myself, anticipations of such extraordinary brightness open to my view, as I can neither give a name to nor describe, — the prospect of

— “ Unmeasured bliss,
“ Imperishable life of peace and love,”

to which I only go before the husband and children so dear to me, there to await our eternal re-union ! — My Arthur ! let me not see those tears ! — they would draw me back to feelings unsuited to my present condition.”

Lady Delmaine had spoken at different times to Mr. Morecroft on the subject of Lady Barbara's cruel aspersions on Adelaide, and committed her justification to his hands as more likely to prove efficacious in reinstating her in the world's eye than any attempts that could be made towards it by Sir Arthur. “ I could wish

my aunt to be made conscious of the injury she has done to our poor ward as well as to myself," she said ; " not in revenge, for from my heart I forgive it ; and sure I am, Adelaide, when she knows it, will do the same ; but that I am desirous she should become sensible of the mischief she does to the cause she is so zealous to support ; — and who can so forcibly point this out to her as you, my excellent friend, who, in every word and action, exemplify, that ' the wisdom which is from above is gentle.' "

Each passing day now brought with it a decrease of strength so evident, and of which Lady Delmaine was herself so well aware, that she grew impatient, even to irritability, for the arrival of Adelaide, whose procrastination appeared indeed unaccountable to all. " Pitying Heaven, grant me but to live to hold the dear girl to my heart !" she said, " and join her hand ~~to~~ yours, my beloved, and I have ~~nothing~~ more to ask ; — but O, my Ar.

thur! take example by me, and let not an earthly idol intervene between you and God! — had I but known my duty sooner, and offered up my sufferings at the foot of his throne in atonement of my own offences, I had found the support that would have saved my breaking down as now.”

“ Cease! cease, Matilda! I conjure you, if you would not altogether destroy me! — I am tortured almost beyond endurance! — the pangs of conscience are alone sufficient.”

“ You accuse yourself too severely, dearest love!” she interrupted; “ you did all that unassisted man can do, — you made a virtuous struggle; — but, like me, were sinking in the combat, because, like me, you sought not to the true source whence strength to conquer is derived. — But what can detain the steps of her who will now be your rich reward? — that she did but know how fast my ‘sands are ebbing!’”

Anxiously and repeatedly had she this day enquired the hour. A carriage at length was heard to stop. "Oh, these flutterings!" she exclaimed; "yet, yet I may not live to behold her!"

Dr. Cosby was cautiously announced. "And no Adelaide! — oh heavens!"

"My dear friend! be composed; she is near at hand," he said, greatly shocked with the deadly symptoms he perceived, "I only wish to guard against excessive agitation."

"Oh, there is no time for caution!" she faintly replied; "hasten! — hasten!"

The Doctor went for Adelaide.

"Raise me a little more, dearest Arthur, that I may see her! — my eyes are very dim!"

Sir Arthur got partly on the bed to prop her up. She grasped his hand.

At this moment the door opened, and Adelaide, supported between Julia and Jane, entered.

"Where, where is she?" cried Lady

Delmaine, stretching forward with that glazed and wild intensity of look which the eye assumes in search of the object it has lost the power of discerning, — a look not to be conceived by those who have not beheld it, and never to be forgotten by those who have. — “Put her hand in mine, and let me join——”

Adelaide's eager glance towards the bed as she entered, had caught that terrific look, expressive of a fierceness, in such strong contrast with the kindly feelings that prompted it; and, heart-struck with the impression of its indicating anger, she sunk under it.

“She has fainted!” exclaimed Charlotte.

Lady Delmaine's head fell upon her husband's shoulder, and her eyes closed—no more to open in this vale of tears!

CHAP. XIV.

THE alarm created by Adelaide's fainting, and subsequent hurry in removing her to the couch in the adjoining apartment, had, for the moment, withdrawn the attention of the females from Lady Delmaine, and prevented their seeing what had taken place. But Dr. Cosby saw it,—he saw also, that in the severely conflicting emotions to which Sir Arthur was just then a prey, his perceptions seemed so blunted as to make him scarce sensible of the entire scene that had passed before his eyes, and not at all so of the event that had closed it.

Desirous to save him as much as might be from the immediate shock, “Let us relieve our friend from this inconvenient posture, Mr. Stanmore! Lady Delmaine

has dropped asleep," said the Doctor with a significant look ; " I will support her while you assist him off the bed, and lay her down so gently it shall not disturb her."

Augustus understood, and obeyed the cautious injunction, and Sir Arthur passively let them do what they pleased, with the most distressing apparent unconsciousness. They led him to his bedroom, where the Doctor left him to the care of Augustus and his own servant, and proceeded to bestow his attention on the other sufferers in this melancholy abode. And here he found it much wanted indeed ! — for the death-like swoon of Adelaide baffled every means taken for her restoration. Nor did any suggestions he had to offer prove efficacious for such a length of time, as to give full scope to the fear that the vital spark had fled, and the perturbed spirit had pursued the track of the peaceful one which had just winged its flight to

happier regions! — *there* to obtain the forgiveness it had here despaired of.

Meantime, Charlotte having returned to her mother, was the first to become aware of her being out of the reach of earthly care or kindness. — Deeply as she felt the stroke, she was sufficiently collected to send the nurse to impart the tidings to Jane, who would best judge, she thought, how to spare poor Julia (now so severely distressed likewise for her friend) in making the communication.

Faint symptoms of recovery at length becoming manifest in Adelaide, she was conveyed to bed, and Jane left at liberty to perform the painful task assigned her, while her brother returned to Sir Arthur with the distressing intelligence, having enjoined Augustus to withhold it till he should be in the way to attend to its effects.

On Sir Arthur having come somewhat to himself, his first question had been,

“ Did I not see Adelaide? — what has occurred? — ”

Augustus endeavoured to soften his answer into a mere assertion of over-fatigue from the journey, having compelled her to lie down, and Lady Delmaine having dropped asleep the while, — and thus pacified his eagerness to be led back to his wife's bed-side till the Doctor should appear.

The heavy affliction felt by all, in the first moments of the loss of this most estimable woman was soon assuaged to some degree of calmness, in the reflection constantly offered to their thoughts by the worthy clergyman, of her full preparation and ardent wish for death, — and need not therefore be dwelt upon! — But the true object of commiseration, was the unhappy Adelaide. Her recovery from the swoon was so far from a restoration of her senses, that, on the contrary, their calamitous state impressed the

Doctor with the most serious apprehensions of permanent derangement.

“That fearful, fearful look!” was her perpetual cry, — at times with screams so wild, as to strike dismay into those who heard them.

“O, take me far from hence, where her avenging spirit incessantly hovers around me!” she would say; “Forgive! — too well I knew she *could* not! — Had I not robbed her of all that was worth living for? — *his* precious affections! — never can I hope to be forgiven! — but take me away from the misery of seeing her ever before me!”

Fruitless was the endeavour to convince her of all the kindness that had been intended, — it was talking to the winds. Her daily visions, — her nightly dreams, — constantly brought Lady Delmaine in anger to her mind’s eye, and these distracted ravings were unmitigating.

Pains had at first been taken in

answering Sir Arthur's anxious enquiries to conceal from him the distressing state of his ward, — till, in failure of all that had yet been tried, it occurred to the Doctor, that possibly *he* might have power to soothe her, and he was then partly informed of the truth, and the proposal made of trying his influence. Sir Arthur, who had only been restrained by an excess of delicacy, from urging his wish before of being admitted to her, caught eagerly at the suggestion, and a message from him, expressive of his desire to see her, was delivered by Jane — but it produced tenfold distraction.

In agony undecipherable, she cried, “ Let him not come near me ! — See you not that appalling spectre which stands betwixt us — to separate us for ever ? — If you have any pity, take me hence ! ”

It was evident this attempt must for the present be relinquished. A consultation was next held upon the expediency of yielding to her incessant

request for removal, and it was agreed to leave the determination with herself, whither she chose to go.

“To the Oldhams,” she instantly said. “At a distance from every individual of the family, she might perhaps escape from that fearful look which so unrelentingly pursued her where she was.”

To less old, or less attached friends than the Oldhams, considerable awkwardness would have been felt in proposing a visit from one in so distracted and doubtful a state of mind ; but to them, Jane had no scruple in detailing the lamentable case, and laying claim to their assistance. Their residence was not above thirty miles’ distance, and a messenger was instantly despatched, with the charge to make all possible speed. His return was as rapid as could be wished, and the answer he brought as friendly.

With the most impatient eagerness did

Adelaide watch the preparations for her departure ; some directions she gave relating to it, were the first signs of coherence she evinced, and they were hailed as the omen of further and full restoration.

It is probable that those of my readers who are best versed in the annals of Cupid, may ere this have surmised the turn Augustus's feelings were now taking. Complaints of an unsympathising mistress to a warmly sympathising friend, who with a gentle tear, vows, like Desdemona, " 'tis wondrous pitiful," are so soothing to the disappointed lover, that he courts every opportunity of seeking the relief, till he is finally relieved altogether, by the transfer of the sentiment to the object so tenderly participating in his distress ; — thus, at least, it was rapidly faring with Augustus Stanmore. And once again did the guileless bosom of Julia cherish hope no longer deceitful, although scarcely avowed, as

yet, even to herself. Neither of them had remitted one instant in their duty to the invalids, but those duties had brought them so naturally, so frequently, and so confidentially together, that the comfort derived to both was inexpressible. No selfish consideration could, however, warp the affectionate heart of Julia to become less zealous for Adclaide's welfare. Grievous as would be a separation from Augustus, in these first indications of growing interest on his part, she was earnestly solicitous for leave to accompany her friend to the Oldhams; — the more so, knowing that Jane could no longer be absent from home: — and earnestly did her father, from various motives, concur in her wish. — But Adclaide pertinaciously resisted the proposal; and she set forward, accompanied by Jane only, who was induced to remain a day or two longer with the unhappy sufferer, to ascertain the hopes that

might be formed, from the change of abode and objects.

A considerable encrease of collectedness was the immediate result : and the friendly Jane left her charge with a heart buoyant with the anticipation of her final complete recovery, although the dreadful paroxysms that followed the slightest allusion to the Delmaines clearly showed, this could only be the work of time. Meanwhile she could not be in kinder hands.

A few weeks passed, which, with gradual and regular progress, restored her to her perfect senses on every point but one, — the entire disbelief of any argument that could be adduced, or asseveration that could be made, of Lady Delmaine's forgiveness, and wish to unite her to Sir Arthur. To this, her only answer was, with a desponding shake of the head, " You are all very good : I know you mean me kindness in the deception ; but I am too well aware IT CANNOT BE : — Am I not her murderer ? " And she

sunk into a profound and settled melancholy, from which nothing roused her.

It was long before she could receive a letter from Julia, without being thrown into fits of the severest distress, — though not now with any appearance of mental disorder ; and much longer before she could be prevailed on to attempt an answer. It cannot be supposed, that Sir Arthur would rest satisfied without also endeavouring to engage her in a correspondence, however restrained by his nice sense of propriety from yet seeking to see her. It was all in vain : — she treasured his letters in her bosom by day, — laid them under her pillow, wet with her tears, at night ; — they were her only solace ; — but no intercourse would she farther hold with him. “ ‘ This sacrifice was all the atonement she could make,” she said, and she persisted in it.

Dr. Cosby at length suggested entire change of scene, by proposing a visit to her French friend, Madame de Mont-

ménil. Sir Arthur hoped much from this, and Julia was directed to mention it. Adelaide eagerly caught at the idea, and declared her readiness to set out forthwith, if her guardian approved.

Her guardian had but one condition to make, that she should admit of the escort of Julia and Augustus ; — and that this might be accomplished with due regard to decorum, he resolved to accelerate the important moment, to which he looked forward in all the fulness of parental satisfaction, of uniting his now happy daughter to the man so long in possession of her heart, — who, won from his first unfortunate and hopeless passion, was at length become as entirely devoted to the simple unassuming loveliness of this sweet girl, as he had previously been to the all-subduing fascinations of her friend.

The first smile that had beamed over the sad countenance of that dear friend, was called up by this most welcome

intelligence ; — “ In the happiness of Julia,” she said, “ I will take refuge from own misery ! ” And for some days the effect was visible ; but it again subsided ; and she only seemed to retain an extreme impatience for the event to take place, that she might set out.

All the celerity that could be obtained, by provisional arrangements to obviate legal delays in the drawing of settlements, Sir Arthur had recourse to. And — whilst the loving and timid girl was far too much agitated by divided feelings to decide for herself the moment that should unite her hand with that of her Augustus, — a natural respect on the one side prompting the wish to wait, at least, the first change of mourning for her mother, — and, on the other, her own earnest desire for the expected benefit to her friend’s health from change of place, and perhaps some feelings less confessed, seconding her lover’s importunate solicitations not to delay his

happiness, — her father, impatient as her lover, saved her all farther perplexity, by peremptorily fixing the day.

It came, — and the blissful knot was tied, under the happiest auspices that the tenderest mutual affection, grounded on the most deserved mutual esteem, could hold out. The interesting pair, with a slight variation, answered the description of Adam and Eve in Paradise :

‘ For ‘manly beauty’ he, and valour, formed,
For softness, she, and sweet attractive grace.

And by their daily encreasing virtues, a more permanent enjoyment of their paradise was secured to them, than had fallen to the lot of our disobedient progenitors.

CHAP. XV.

WITH rapturous joy did Madame de Montménil hail the intimation of this intended visit. Urgently and repeatedly had she expressed the wish for it, from the time of her being informed of the indifferent state of Adelaide's health and spirits, ever since her attack of fever. The most delicate forbearance had been observed on the part of Augustus, who was her regular correspondent, in not giving the slightest hint of the attachment of Adelaide for her guardian, or of any of the particularly distressing consequences of Lady Delmaine's death; so that the amiable and warm-hearted Countess was far from imagining the lamentable wreck she was to behold. Adelaide's own letter, indeed, was sufficiently me-

lancholy to lead her to the conclusion, that something more than she had yet been made acquainted with lurked under such very deep dejection, and, naturally enough, inclined her to suspect the infidelity of Augustus as the cause ; he not having been very explicit on the subject of his change of sentiments ; — and hence the eager expectation of her young friend's visit suffered a material drawback from finding by whom she was to be accompanied. With the most animated alacrity she had, in the first instance, set about preparing the apartment of the Abbé for the reception of Adelaide ; he very readily agreeing to seek *un gîte quelconque*, the while, no matter how inconvenient, he said, *quand il s'agit d'accommoder une dame*. But with the travelling companions now proposed, this arrangement became superfluous ; they would, of course, not separate. Fortunately, however, (as it seemed,) the *rez de chaussée* apartment of the very hotel in which the Countess and

the Abbé occupied the *entresol*, would become vacant just in time for the reception of the travellers ; and this settled the matter quite satisfactorily.

One ineffectual attempt was made by Sir Arthur to obtain an interview with his ward before her departure ; — but she continued firm in her resistance, although agitated beyond measure at the proposal : — and the temporary incoherence which was again the result, shewed the inexpediency, as yet, of urging the point.

The Oldhams, on taking leave of Adelaide, charged her with a letter, and some trifling present, for an old bishop, to whom she had been known at Florence, when he was an emigrant abbé, little foreseeing to what issue such a renewal of acquaintance might lead.

The travellers advanced prosperously on their journey, and the most favourable reports reached Sir Arthur from his punctual correspondents, Augustus and Julia, who now saw every object in the brightest

colours, through the dazzling medium of their own felicity. Adelaide, they assured him, already felt the exhilarating effects of the clear transparent continental atmosphere; — she had smiled; — she had taken an interest in some passing object; — in short, they made no doubt of every result that could be wished.

It was indeed true, that a smile had more than once illumined the habitual melancholy of Adelaide's countenance; but it was merely the momentary reflection of her friend's unbounded happiness, in which she sought, as she had said she would, a "refuge from her own intense misery;" — and it was a smile so sad, so evanescent, as to a tranquil observer would only have seemed to deepen the gloom that succeeded it.

Adelaide was received by the animated, grateful, affectionate Countess, with a tenderness truly maternal. At the first sound of the postilion's whip she had run down into the *avant-cour*, where, in de-

fiance of a storm of wind and sleet, she stood, wholly unconscious of it, ready to receive her in her arms on the opening of the carriage-door. She partly led, and partly carried her into the hôtel, so entirely was Adelaide overpowered by the excess of Madame de Montménil's emotion,—which, though in the first moment it had impeded her utterance, soon broke forth in disjointed exclamations of mixed delight and dismay, as she alternately held her to her bosom, and again drew back to survey and seek to recognize her.

“Je la liens donc enfin, cette chere enfant, à qui je dois tant,” she cried ; — *“Mais, juste ciel ! est-ce bien mon Adelaide ? — cette charmante Adelaide ! — rayonnante dans son enfance de joie et de santé ! — que je vois maintenant si languissante, si défaite, si foible ? — Que lui a-t-on donc fait, au nom de Dieu ? — Un tel changement ne résulteroit pas du seul climat, quelque humide qu’il puisse être !”*

She was stopt in her observations by the claims of politeness to Adelaide's companions, whom, in the first ebullitions of her feelings, she had overlooked. Prepossessed, however, as she was, with the suspicion of some blame attaching to Augustus, she did not immediately give him all the cordiality of reception he had reason to expect, — though her good breeding in some degree supplied the failure; — and Julia very quickly gained her utmost approbation. Nor was she long kept in ignorance of the true grounds of her young friend's unhappiness. The facility of inquiry into your private concerns inherent in French intimacy, saves a world of time in furthering confidential communication. Adelaide had shrunk from it: the subject was one too trying for her to bear to enter upon: but the simple-minded open-hearted Julia saw no reason for withholding every particular the Countess could wish to know. Nor was there indeed any cause

for reserve, with one so tenderly and deeply interested.

Madame de Montménéil felt anxious in the extreme for the restoration of Adelaide's peace of mind, and applied herself, with unremitting assiduity, to the means of effecting it ; — among the most promising of which she was inclined to consider the circumstance of the Bishop of N——— happening to occupy the *troisième*, or upper apartment, in this same hôtel. He was the person to whom the letter and presents from the Oldhams were addressed, — the early friend of the poor mourner, — a man of exemplary zeal and piety. — Perhaps the Countess did not accurately take into consideration the influence these qualities might enable him to exert over the susceptible mind of Adelaide ; — or, if she did, can it quite be expected she should contemplate the result, that might not improbably be anticipated, in the same light with Adelaide's English friends?

The Bishop was not slow in availing himself of the easy access to her, which dwelling under the same roof afforded him; and an apparent increase of calmness soon encouraged the most flattering hopes; though as yet she could not be prevailed on to accompany her friends, in visiting any of the usual objects of travellers' curiosity, of which Madame de Montménil took great delight in doing the honours.

They had not been many weeks in Paris, when a proposal was made by a former acquaintance of Augustus, that he and his ladies should join an agreeable party in an excursion into Italy. Adelaide decidedly objected for herself to the plan, firmly resisting the earnest solicitations with which she was assailed;—but was equally urgent that Augustus and Julia should avail themselves of so pleasant an offer. Their extreme reluctance to separate from her caused much and long discussion,—Madame de Montménil strongly concurring in the arguments

for their going ; — but, not until they perceived an expression of something like displeasure in the Countess, at the implied doubt of *her* assiduity and attention during their absence, did they give way, and agree to devolve upon her the regular communication by every post with Sir Arthur : — for to the determination of holding no intercourse with him by answering his letters herself, his ward inflexibly adhered.

The day was fixed for their departure ; but, before it came, — to their infinite surprise and no less delight, — they received an intimation of a change in Adelaide's inclinations. Finding that Florence came into an early part of their plan, she expressed a willingness to revisit scenes that had left impressions of interest on her mind. She would accompany them thither, on the *condition*, she said, of being allowed to remain in the asylum of her younger years, whilst they pursued their farther progress.

Adelaide, who, from the excess of self-confidence, was now verging fast to the opposite extreme of self-distrust, was so fearful of interference from her guardian, when her continued intercourse with the Bishop gradually prevailed to induce in her the inclination, — and not long after the resolve, — of returning to her original faith, that she had been uniformly silent to her young friends on this important subject:—On their part, engrossed by sights, engagements, and each other, and wholly ignorant of the frequency of the Bishop's visits, they remained without a suspicion of the deep and momentous changes that were going on in her thoughts.

The happy couple, with eyes only for the bright side of every object, warmly congratulated themselves upon the first instance of their friend's taking a positive interest in any thing. To their sanguine views, it seemed an earnest of the accomplishment of every wish they still had left to form. Nor must even the

Countess be severely blamed, if, — on becoming aware of the probability that this *brébis égarée* might, ere long, be recalled to the fold, — an event of such vital importance, according to the tenets of her faith, took such satisfactory possession of her thoughts, as to blind her to any *ulterior* consequences, which a more jealous, or even a more dispassionate observer, might perhaps have augured. No danger was imagined, no objection started ; — but, on the contrary, this unexpected concession on the part of Adelaide was greeted with rapturous acknowledgments.

The reports transmitted to Sir Arthur had, from the first, been progressively favourable ; that which was now made to him was penned with exultation. Every thing might be expected from this unhoped-for concurrence in a plan that could not fail to dissipate the gloom still occasionally hanging over her, by the various objects of interest it would offer, *now* that interest was once again avowedly

awakened in her mind. Her *intention* (for so they interpreted what she had stated as the *condition* of her acquiescence) of remaining at Florence was not likely to hold against all the arguments and temptations with which they and their associates would assail it ; no reasonable doubt could, in short, any longer be entertained, but that the happiest result was in prospect, and her perfect recovery would finally be granted to their incessant vows and prayers. And thus was her guardian also lulled into cherishing hope, and soothing his impatience by the preparations for a meeting at Paris, whenever they should return thither.

But far other plans and hopes were now filling the agitated bosom of Adelaide. The Bishop had been earnest in his labours to reclaim the apostate, as he considered her. He had had no prior religious instruction to combat, — her mind was quite open to the impression his fervent zeal sought to make upon it ;

she was easily convinced of having too lightly, and without investigation, renounced the belief of her forefathers : and hearing now but one side of the question, and that from lips fluent and rich in the knowledge of the best arguments that could be adduced in its favour, her re-conversion was rapid and sincere. Her instructor was, however, too well versed in the weaknesses of human nature, to place much reliance on the stability of a mind so wholly devoted in affection to a heretic, as he knew her's to be ;—for, as her confessor, every thought was disclosed to him ;—and much did he lament the abolition, in France, of those secure asylums for wavering faith, which (however occasionally abused) the better days of religion had raised up to protect its votaries from the dangerous intercourse of the world, and the more subtle seduction of their own hearts. His sister, the Abbess, had more than once occurred to him ; had she and her convent been at

hand, it might have gradually accustomed the young penitent to contemplate, with less dismay, the magnitude of the sacrifice to which it seemed so desirable to turn her thoughts. — At the distance of *Florence*, the measure was of such difficult accomplishment, as scarcely to be thought of.

But when Adelaide imparted to him the proposal that had been made her to join her friends in their Italian excursion, and her decided refusal, from unwillingness to separate herself from *him*, her spiritual guide, it struck him as an interposition of Providence in favour of his wish. Still he deemed some caution requisite in availing himself of the opportunity which thus offered itself, lest too sudden a disclosure should cause her wholly to shrink from the awful step, — and he prudently contented himself with listening to her communication, without, for the present, making any remark upon the negative she had given. He had not yet duly

estimated the height of her character. He had noted the intensity of her attachment to her guardian, — her terrors, — her struggles, fluctuations, and distrust of her own steadiness ; but he had not done justice to her sincerity, in the declaration she had repeatedly made to him, “ That were she, in a weak moment, to be drawn aside from the resolution she had formed, her death should impede the guilty union.” This was so much more in the spirit of romance than of the religious aspirations he was labouring to excite in her, that he paid but slight attention to it, and only felt anxious to provide her with a better security. Guardedly, therefore, in a subsequent interview, did he enter upon an eulogium of his sister, ending with an expression of regret, that Adelaide’s having declined the proposed excursion, deprived her of the opportunity she might have had, of benefiting by the society and example of such a saint as he described the Superior

of Valombrosa to be, when he was eagerly interrupted by the exclamation, "Your sister! Abbess of Valombrosa! of the blessed asylum of my childhood! — that abode of peace and happiness! — Oh that I might again take shelter within its walls! — Peace might, at least in some degree, revisit this tortured breast, when I shall have made the only atonement to *her* manes now in my power."

This was so much beyond the Bishop's hopes, that he felt he might safely leave the impression to its own workings, contenting himself with some trivial observation in return, and reserving any weight of argument he might see occasion to throw into the scale, should the enthusiasm now rising in her mind again subside. But of such a falling back there was here no danger; on the contrary, the idea of her escape from the world became the single object that engrossed her every thought, and he soon found he might safely afford it the strong support of his unqualified

approbation. More than ever apprehensive of the frustration of her plan, if too early avowed, she earnestly entreated his concurrence in concealing it. He, of course, was nothing slack in complying : the colouring to be given to the change in her disposition, respecting the journey, was agreed upon, — and that even from Madame de Montménil its ultimate intention should be withheld, till too late for interference. The result answered to their wish ; not the slightest suspicion was entertained of the actual object in view, although the Countess had been considerably struck, as well as deeply moved, by the passionate fervour of affection shown by Adelaide in taking leave of her, and the singular vehemence of her expressions. Again and again had the conscious girl returned to embrace her, sobbing out, “ Oh, don’t forget me ! — pray for peace to my disturbed mind ! — ever will your kindness be engraven on my heart ! — Oh, forget me not ! ”

Madame de Montménil was gratified, but could not understand it. Her young friend had held so continually back from her, had met the warmth of her caresses with a comparative coolness so oppressive, — that, without losing the tenderest interest in so unhappy a being, she had curbed the display of her own feelings, — viewed with indulgence the effects of the blight that had passed over those of Adelaïde, — and made up her mind to bear with an insensibility so disastrously to be accounted for. But there was no real insensibility in Adelaïde to the unremitting kindness of the Countess: — her heart acknowledged and returned it, by all the affection she had left to bestow; — though the habitual gloom of her thoughts rendered her inattentive to the demonstration of what she sincerely felt; till her present consciousness of parting for ever from this attached friend, drew forth the burst of feeling so unexpected, and apparently so unaccountable.

The reports received from the travellers, as they proceeded onwards, were promising ; they dwelt with much complacency on the strong interest which Adelaide expressed, whenever she could be drawn out of her fits of abstraction, in her intended sojourn at Florence, and the impatience with which she met every proposal that was likely to delay her arrival there. From Florence itself, however, came an avowal of disappointment in the impossibility of moving her, from the determination of making it her abode during the prosecution of their farther plans ; though this was scarce to be wondered at, either, when they considered the attraction held out to her in the engaging manners and extraordinarily kind reception of the Lady Abbess, who had immediately insisted upon accommodating her with an apartment in the convent contiguous to her own, where she was treated with such respectful and soothing attentions by all the sisterhood, as well

as by the Superior herself, that beneficial effects could not but be confidently expected, although in a less degree perhaps than might have arisen from a constant change of scene. There was an evident encrease of tranquillity in her looks and manner, the letters went on to state, which gave room for the most sanguine hopes ; but she must now, said the travellers in their last letter to Madame de Montménil, be left to report of herself, during the weeks allotted to their visiting Rome and Naples, for which they were shortly setting forward, leaving many important objects to be attended to when they should return to join their friend again at Florence, — and to conduct her back, they trusted, in a state once more to feel and confer happiness.

Adelaide was extremely reluctant to treat Madame de Montménil with insincerity, by writing, and withholding from her the important step she had taken, in assuming the probationary veil the very day

her companions had left Florence. And yet she feared a too early disclosure might still produce a distressing interference on the part of her guardian. So she suffered post after post to pass by, without any more direct or explicit communication than was made through the Bishop ; to whom the Abbess had immediately written, and who imparted to Madame de Montménil no more than he thought necessary.

This silence could not be very long continued without exciting uneasy surprise in the Countess, and finally considerable alarm, not void of suspicion, suggested by casual expressions of the Bishop, now no longer so completely on his guard, since he knew the noviciate fairly entered upon. Resolved at length to come at the truth, she questioned him so closely that she obtained the full avowal.

How it affected her, will appear in the letter she instantly wrote and despatched

by express to Sir Arthur, who till that time, it must be observed, had not received the slightest hint of the return of his ward to the faith of her early years.

The reader may therefore conceive his feelings, on reading the following letter :

*‘ Je ne sais trop comment m’y prendre,
‘ pour tâcher d’adoucir le coup cruel qui
‘ vous menace, mon digne ami, puisque
‘ pour peu qu’il y ait encore la possibilité
‘ de le détourner, il me paroît qu’il n’y a
‘ pas un moment à perdre. — Apprenez
‘ donc que l’Évêque de N——, ayant
‘ connu nôtre Adelaïde dans son enfance,
‘ en Italie, s’en est prévalu, pour la re-
‘ chercher avec empressement, pendant son
‘ séjour à Paris. Logé dans le même
‘ hôtel, il la voyoit à toute heure ; — ils
‘ avoient de longues conversations, aux-
‘ quelles Adelaïde se plaisoit, — s’en louoit,
‘ — et je voyois sa tranquillité reprendre
‘ à mesure. — Jusques-là, il n’y avoit rien*

‘ à craindre. Je savois qu’il étoit question
‘ de religion entre eux, mais il étoit naturel
‘ qu’il cherchât à la ramener à la foi de
‘ ses ancêtres. Je ne devois pas m’en mê-
‘ ler, et, vu la circonstance, à coup sûr
‘ vous-même n’auriez pas désiré d’y mettre
‘ obstacle. Mais l’Évêque ne s’en est pas
‘ tenu là ; — et voici ce que je viens de dé-
‘ couvrir ; — ce qui me glace d’effroi ; —
‘ et ce que je m’empresse de vous commu-
‘ niquer à l’instant même. — Porté par le
‘ zèle de la garantir contre tout danger de
‘ rechûte, il s’est emparé de cette imagi-
‘ nation si vive, de ce caractère enthou-
‘ siaste, pour lui inspirer le désir de
‘ prendre la voile ; et l’a consignée à sa
‘ sœur, Abbessé du Couvent de Val Om-
‘ brosa, où elle a été élevée, à Florence,
‘ pour mettre fin à l’œuvre qu’il n’a fait
‘ qu’entamer. — Il prétend que c’est Ada-
‘ laïde elle-même qui en a eu la première
‘ idée. — Je ne saurois le croire — non plus
‘ qu’à la réalité de la vocation. — Quelle
‘ vocation, grand Dieu ! — Offrir au Sei-

‘ gneur un cœur tout brûlant d’amour ter-
‘ restre ! — dont la passion pour vous est
‘ une idolatrie ! — C’est une profanation,
‘ qui fait dresser les cheveux ! — Et on
‘ seroit capable de profiter d’un moment
‘ d’exaltation, où elle croiroit peut-être
‘ expier sa faute, cette sensible et malheu-
‘ reuse créature ! — en prononçant des
‘ vœux, dont toute sa vie ne seroit plus
‘ qu’un long repentir ! — Non, je n’y puis
‘ penser sans frémir ! — J’en ai dit tout
‘ rondement mon avis à l’Évêque, et nous
‘ avons fini par nous brouiller. Mais ce
‘ n’est pas de cela qu’il s’agit ! — c’est de
‘ prévenir le mal ! — Précipitez donc vos
‘ pas vers Florence, pour l’amour du ciel !
‘ — C’est tout l’espoir qui nous reste !’

CHAP. XVI.

MADAME de Montménil's letter went near to bereave Sir Arthur of his senses. Very far was he now from the indifference she supposed, in regard even to the re-conversion of his ward. But what followed was a blow so stunning — the apprehension of losing her altogether inflicted a pang so severe — as scarce left him the power to articulate his orders for instantaneous departure. He stopt but to leave Charlotte under the protection of Jane Cosby, and proceeded to Paris, with all speed, and even with a latent hope of inducing the Countess to accompany him, and assist in the arduous task of rescuing Adelaide from the influence, to which she was in such danger of becoming a victim.

The Countess was convinced she had done all in her power by giving immediate notice to Mr. and Mrs. Stanmore, as well as himself, of the alarming discovery, and that she could be of no farther use than by her vows and prayers for his success. She should only delay his progress on the road, she said, and was obliged to confess her opinions had no weight with her young friend, when at all differing from those of the Bishop. The sister, she understood, was a most insinuating person, well calculated to promote her brother's views, and the only chance of counteracting them, lay in Sir Arthur's own power over the heart and mind, and his right over the person of his ward.

He lost not a moment more in combating what she seemed to have too just grounds for asserting, and pursued his agitating journey night and day, with feelings only to be compared to those of a criminal, still looking for a reprieve at

the moment of setting his foot upon the scaffold.

On alighting at the *Locanda del Pelicano*, a considerable degree of bustle and disorder seemed to prevail, and apologies were made for the poor accommodation that could be given him, on account of the great influx of travellers, attracted to witness the profession of a nun on the preceding day ; — an event which had so distressed a *Signora Inglese*, now in the hotel, that she was lying dangerously ill in consequence of it. A superstitious chill crept over his weakened, harassed frame, — as if it were the disastrous omen of his own fate. — “ *Il povero Signor marito é, davvero, quasi matto,*” the waiter went on to say, — “ because *un certo medico Inglese* could not be found, in quest of whom he had been sending one person after another all the morning, — *ma eccolo appunto, poverino !*”

Sir Arthur, buried in his distressing

anticipations, paid little attention to this, when a hurried step along the corridor obliging him to give way, to escape being run against, — the exclamations of — “Augustus!” — “Sir Arthur!” — burst from them both at once, and they rushed into each other’s arms.

“Gracious God! that you at least might have been spared this dreadful shock!” cried Augustus.

“Shock! — is Julia then in danger?”

“Julia is nearly sinking under it, — who could have foreseen this unheard-of mode of securing their victim? — this cruel dispensation with the probationary year?”

The whole fearful truth flashed upon Sir Arthur in the instant, — and he fell to the ground, as though he had been shot! —

It may be here necessary to state, that previous to the departure of the Stanmores from Florence, Julia had requested a private interview with the

Lady Abbess, for the purpose of confiding to her the unhappy delusion under which her friend laboured, respecting the implacability of Lady Delmaine, earnestly entreating her assistance to remove it in any way she could possibly devise. The Abbess listened, and with an apparent air of candour, expatiated on the deep interest Adelaide must inspire in whoever approached her ; — assured Julia, that the restoration of tranquillity to so disturbed a mind, was an object she had much at heart ; — was greatly obliged by the trust now reposed in her, which afforded a clue to the means to be pursued, — and, in short, sent away the unsuspecting Julia, satisfied that her utmost concurrence might be relied on.

The Abbess, in her evasive answers, had sought a salvo for her conscience, should she find it expedient for the restoration of Adelaide's peace, to resort to means of a different character from those

which Julia contemplated. She was a well-intentioned woman ; but, blinded by over zeal in the cause of her church and her convent, her solicitude for the welfare of her novice was combined with a desire, full as eager, to secure to both the possession of so valuable a prize.

In the unvarying monotony of her noviciate, the poor penitent experienced fluctuations and struggles at which she was herself terrified, — not that she wavered in her purpose ! — the expiation must be made, and made it should be, though at the expence of her life ! — but every day and every hour seemed to deepen her sense of her own sacrifice, as well as of the misery she was preparing for her beloved guardian. The penetrating Abbess narrowly watched, and speedily detected this growing disturbance in the mind of the wretched girl ; and clearly foresaw the consequences to be apprehended, should the Stanmores return in time to fetch over this idolized heretic

‘to the rescue,’ — when they should discover what was going on. His influence might indeed be of potency sufficient to upset all, unless means could be fallen upon to be before-hand with the danger. — There certainly was one way, — not often resorted to, — difficult enough to obtain ; — but the Cardinal, who stood highest in the confidence of the Pope, was a near relation of the Abbess ; and, through his interest, the thing might be accomplished, — could Adelaide herself be brought to agree to it. The last proved a matter of less difficulty than might have been expected. The candid honesty with which she imparted her struggles, terrors, and distrust of her own fortitude, gave a ready opening to the insinuations that would gradually lead to the important proposal the Superior was preparing to make ; but the concurrence of the agitated novice did not await so slow a process, — she caught, with all the eagerness of her impetuous nature, at the very first suggestion of, “ How

desirable it would be for the calming her distracted mind, that the probationary period were of shorter duration !”

“ Blessed indeed would it be to her !” she said ; “ the die once irrevocably cast, peace must ensue !— But such a long succession of months to look forward to ! —such an alarming increase of distress as must be encountered when Julia should return !”

“ And could you really wish the moment nearer at hand ?” asked the cautious Abbess, hesitating whether to venture upon further disclosure just then.

The peculiar expression of her countenance struck Adelaide, and she eagerly exclaimed, “ Could I ? — is there a possibility ? — is such a relief ever accorded ? — oh, for pity — for mercy’s sake tell me !” —

“ I believe it would not be altogether unprecedented,” was the reply.

“ Oh, how can it be done, my mo-

ther?—may I throw myself at the feet of his holiness to implore?”—

“The mode of applying,” interrupted the Abbess, “must remain for further consideration; if, upon mature reflection, I should see fit to concur in your wish. — Curb your impatience, my daughter, this is a point that requires serious deliberation: — I will turn it in my thoughts.”

The skilful manœuvrer had penetrated sufficiently into the character of her novice to be aware, that giving the reins to her enthusiasm would be here the most judicious proceeding; rightly conjecturing, that the sense of *voluntary* acceleration of the awful sacrifice impending, might raise up, in her impassioned and high-toned mind, something of that strength to support her through it, which should have been supplied by the true vocation, too evidently wanting. An apparent hanging back would probably increase the urgency for the step, as well as mark it more decidedly Adelaide's own act and deed.

Nor was this expectation frustrated; every day brought with it a more impatient request for some attempt to be made towards obtaining the so ardently desired boon. The wish was at length complied with; and a pretty strong case made out, in which it appeared, "That the fervent young probationer, in manifest dread of the interposition of a heretic guardian, whose control over her actions, and influence over her mind, were equally unlimited, threw herself upon the protection of his holiness, to anticipate such interference by abridging the term of the noviciate." — This, enforced by many important observations of the Abbess, and despatched without being seen by the petitioner, excited an active zeal in the Cardinal to whom the negotiation was committed, which was crowned with success. The Papal mandate was issued, and acted upon with a celerity that effectually foiled, as has been seen, Madame de Montménéil's endeavours to give

timely notice to those most nearly concerned.

Julia was unwell, in consequence of a fright, when the Countess's communication reached Naples. And Augustus, apprised of the risk to which she would be exposed by setting out before her strength was sufficiently recruited, — and not having the slightest suspicion of what was going on at Florence, — had remained quietly watching over her, till he obtained the physician's sanction for her removal. By which means they, though so near at hand, had but arrived the day before Sir Arthur, and precisely on that eventful one which gave the death-blow to all hope.

After depositing his Julia safely at the inn, Augustus had repaired to the convent, for the purpose of securing an interview between the friends on the morrow ; but was told at the gate, no access could be granted, as a nun having just been professed, precluded all possibility of admittance for that day. Little suspecting

how nearly the matter concerned him, he asked no questions, but quickly retraced his steps, anxious to ascertain his wife's not having suffered from the journey.

At the inn, however, a scene awaited him, for which he was not prepared. — Madeleine, having free egress and regress in the convent, had sought out Pierre, to make over a packet to his care, to be forwarded to Julia, — which the Abbess had entrusted to her that morning, with the strictest injunction not to let it go out of her hand till the sacred ceremony should be concluded. Pierre hearing of the arrival of English travellers, and thinking he might learn from them where to find the Stanmores, immediately bent his steps to the Locanda, in quest of information, where the first person he met with was their own courier. — Naturally deeming himself in high luck at such unexpected success, he requested admission to Julia, to deliver the packet into her own hands. Julia had lain

down, and sent her maid for the packet ; — she staid long away, and returned with a look of distressed perplexity.

“ Where is the packet ? ” said her mistress.

“ I have got it, Ma’am, — but, but, — if you would please to wait till my master came back.”

“ What for ? ”

“ I’m sadly afraid, Ma’am, there will be some bad news in it.”

“ Thank you, for your caution, Wilson ; — but you may give it me : — I know the worst.”

But poor Julia soon found her mistake, in believing so, when she read the following letter :

‘ To MRS. STANMORE.

‘ DEAREST Julia ! sweet friend ! — I feel
‘ the pain this letter will give you ; but
‘ you will not grudge it, if the result of
‘ what I shall communicate, be, as I am
‘ promised, peace to me. You will not
‘ grudge my breaking for a few moments,

' into such transcendent happiness, as
 ' you are in possession of, — united,
 ' fortunate girl! to the husband of your
 ' choice, adoring and adored! — but, oh
 ' Julia! let no self-deluding Adelaide
 ' approach him, setting her own wisdom
 ' in opposition to *that* of the world, to
 ' purloin a single thought from the wife
 ' of his bosom, — wisdom extracted from
 ' the writings of wild dreamers, and
 ' romantic sentimentalists! — And with
 ' equal caution, beloved friend, keep
 ' such visionary enthusiasts of whatever
 ' description, at a distance from yourself,
 ' whom I so sincerely grieve to have
 ' entangled in the erroneous opinions,
 ' I have now such deep and bitter cause
 ' to deplore. — How frequently does the
 ' form of my beloved, respected, injured
 ' benefactress, still rise to my repentant
 ' view, and seem to ask me by what
 ' fallacious sophistry I could so have
 ' deceived myself, as to think, that be-
 ' cause I stopped short of actual crime,

‘ I could be justified in seeking to
‘ attract to myself those tender affections,
‘ which constituted her chief felicity ?
‘ With truly maternal kindness did she
‘ point out my error when it was yet time :
‘ — and I — infatuated selfish wretch !
‘ — I persisted to the destruction of
‘ her health and life ! — Well may these
‘ penitent tears blot my words as I write.
‘ — Oh ! can they blot out my deeds in
‘ Heaven ? — for thither alone must all
‘ my thoughts be henceforth directed. —
‘ Start not, dear friend, at what I have
‘ to tell ! — I entered on my noviciate in
‘ the very hour of your leaving Florence,
‘ but was unwilling you should know it, till
‘ I could say, — *as now*, — Ere this reaches
‘ you, the miserable Adelaide will have
‘ offered the only expiation in her power,
‘ by taking the veil ! — expiation doubly
‘ required, I am told, for my apostacy
‘ from the religion of my forefathers. —
‘ Indeed, on this apostacy the Bishop
‘ and the Abbess lay greater stress than

‘ than on the guilt that weighs so
 ‘ heavily on my soul; — ’tis this, how-
 ‘ ever, that has goaded me on to seek in
 ‘ this asylum a security against any
 ‘ possibility of wavering.

‘ To the Pope’s gracious dispensation
 ‘ of the probationary year, — a favour
 ‘ the most powerful interest could alone
 ‘ have obtained, — I cling for steadiness
 ‘ to bear me on through this awful
 ‘ act : — For to you, Julia, from whom I
 ‘ have never concealed a thought, I
 ‘ must confess, that it is a heart replete
 ‘ with earthly love I am profanely
 ‘ offering up at the altar of my Creator.
 ‘ I shrink in terror from the thoughts of
 ‘ what I must vow henceforward to live
 ‘ for ! — but, I shall not live, Julia ! —
 ‘ that is my hope and my consolation.
 ‘ Do not be distressed at my saying so.
 ‘ I am lost, at any rate, you know, to
 ‘ those I love, — separated for ever, —
 ‘ in this life at least ; — think how very
 ‘ wretched I must feel, to have recourse

‘ to so desperate a remedy ! And again
‘ let me repeat the caution, dearest friend,
‘ to take warning by my so sad example.
‘ Could there be greater purity of in-
‘ tention than mine ? — Could there be
‘ more virtuous struggles than his ? —
‘ Yet, see how the ruin has spread ! —
‘ Your excellent mother destroyed ! —
‘ Your sister withdrawing from you for
‘ your partiality to the invader of that
‘ domestic peace you were all so happily
‘ enjoying, till I came like a fiend to
‘ blast it ! — and, to complete the whole,
‘ can I conceal from myself the lasting
‘ misery I am stamping on your father’s
‘ life, — I, who would willingly have
‘ laid down mine, to promote his happi-
‘ ness in the smallest degree ! — Oh ! fly
‘ to him, Julia ! Let not conjugal felicity
‘ absorb all your feelings ! — think ! think
‘ what he will suffer ! — be you and your
‘ Augustus the gentle bearers of the sad
‘ tidings to him. You best can soothe
‘ his distress, and much — very much he

‘ will need it !—for, too plain have I seen
 ‘ of late, that hope breathed anew in his
 ‘ letters, arising from the reports made
 ‘ to him of my recovering tranquillity.
 ‘ Alas! that was delusion all! — the
 ‘ tranquillity of despair, — when I had
 ‘ made the strong resolve, which they
 ‘ say will give me peace; — but too
 ‘ surely I feel peace cannot be for me
 ‘ on this side the tomb. Use every per-
 ‘ suasion, beloved friend, to convince
 ‘ him, that no length of time could have
 ‘ obviated the impediment to our union.
 ‘ — The slightest infringement of the
 ‘ compact I have made would again
 ‘ have drawn the appalling apparition
 ‘ from its dread abode, to step between
 ‘ and separate us: — until satisfied on this
 ‘ head, her perturbed spirit could find
 ‘ no rest, — ’twas only when I gave that
 ‘ promise, she refrained from haunting
 ‘ my sad couch. — You never would
 ‘ believe, Julia, in supernatural inter-
 ‘ ference, though I had heard such fear-

‘ ful details of it in this very convent ; —
‘ little did I foresee, it would be my
‘ wretched lot to afford the proof of its
‘ reality ! — This consciousness it was, my
‘ Julia, that guarded me from being mis-
‘ led by the assurances of forgiveness, you
‘ all joined in endeavouring to pacify me
‘ with ; — but even could this terrific im-
‘ pression have been obliterated, — oh !
‘ convince him happiness could never
‘ have been for us ! No felicity attending
‘ upon our union, could possibly for one
‘ moment have deadened conscience to
‘ the torturing sense, that it was the
‘ guilty indulgence of an unhallowed
‘ sentiment, which had so deplorably led
‘ to it ; — never was this bitter feeling to
‘ be overcome ! — And, yet, — as the day
‘ approaches, my heart sinks within me,
‘ in dread that I still am wrong, — but
‘ the die is cast, and I am impelled
‘ forward to — I scarce dare contemplate
‘ to what ! — Can Heaven accept of vows
‘ so irreligiously taken ? — I tremble to

' my inmost soul, at the awful doubt ! —
 ' My tears so blind me I must break
 ' off. Dear, happy friend, farewell ! I
 ' cannot envy you ; but it is not in lan-
 ' guage to paint the deep misery of your
 ' unfortunate

' ADELAIDE.'

The distressing conviction, that her friend's fate was then irrevocably sealed, joined to the sad anticipation of what this stroke would be to her father, produced an agitation in Julia's spirits, manifested by a return of the fainting fits which had before occasioned Augustus so much alarm. The cries of Wilson for assistance had assembled the master, mistress, and attendants, all crowding about the Signora, proposing different nostrums and different *Medico's*, when Augustus found his way into the midst of this scene of confusion. Terrified, as may well be supposed, knowing no physician in particular, and having little confidence

generally in their skill, he was at his wits' end, and under the necessity of letting them call in whom they pleased. At Naples an English medical friend of his own had attended, and this friend had talked of speedily joining him at Florence. It was the impatient and hourly expectation of his arrival, which had caused the repeated despatch of various messengers to every inn in the town, — and which, together with the reiterated and wild ejaculations drawn from him by the painful discovery *whose* profession it was, that had taken place, had impressed the waiter with the idea of his being beside himself.

Doctor A—— fortunately arrived in time to save Julia from the effects of mismanagement, — and Sir Arthur from being buried alive !

CHAP. XVII.

THE seizure of Sir Arthur was of that dreadful sort known by the name Catalepsy, which, with the immobility and external semblance of perfect death, leaves the internal consciousness of all that is passing around. To all appearance the vital spark was wholly extinct, and the agony of poor Augustus baffles representation. But Doctor A—— was cautious in forming his opinion. The resuscitation of the Duchess de Choiseul *,

* The curious detail of this very singular incident is thus given by Dutens:— ‘Madame de Choiseul
 ‘ retomba malade, — (at Paris, in 1783), —
 ‘ fut dans la situation la plus critique et la plus
 ‘ étonnante; elle empira au point qu’après l’avoir
 ‘ bien examinée, les médecins ne lui trouvant plus
 ‘ ni poulx, ni haleine, la jugèrent morte. Prête à
 ‘ être enterrée toute vivante, elle entendoit tout ce
 ‘ qui se disoit autour d’elle, sans pouvoir donner le
 ‘ moindre signe de vie. Cependant on avoit arraché
 ‘ M. de Choiseul de sa chambre, et les médecins

after being put into her coffin, was an event of too much notoriety on the continent not to have left a lasting impression (particularly in a country where

‘ étoient venus, quelque tems après, lui annoncer
 ‘ qu’elle n’existoit plus ; on se prépara à lui rendre
 ‘ les derniers devoirs. On ne peut imaginer quelle
 ‘ étoit l’affliction de son mari Ceux qui ne le
 ‘ quittèrent point pendant tout ce tems-là, m’ont
 ‘ assuré n’avoir jamais vu de douleur aussi
 ‘ profonde que celle qu’il montra alors. Au moment
 ‘ où ses amis l’entouroient et cherchoient à calmer
 ‘ son désespoir, il sortit avec précipitation de son
 ‘ appartement, s’écriant qu’il vouloit voir sa femme
 ‘ une dernière fois ; et en entrant dans sa chambre,
 ‘ il se jeta sur son corps, répétant à cris redoublés :
 ‘ Ma femme, ma chère femme !

‘ Madame de Choiseul m’a raconté elle-même
 ‘ que ces cris perçants l’avoient rapellée à la vie ;
 ‘ elle étoit dans une profonde léthargie, ou plutôt
 ‘ catalepsie. Cette voix fut plus efficace que tous
 ‘ les moyens employés quelques heures avant ; . . .
 ‘ et afin de l’exprimer dans les propres termes
 ‘ dont elle se servit, en me faisant ce récit, ‘ La voix
 ‘ seule de cet homme que vous savez que j’adore,
 ‘ pouvoit me faire reprendre mes sens.’ Elle revint
 ‘ tout-à-coup à elle, et se trouva assez de force
 ‘ pour se soulever et jeter ses bras autour du cou
 ‘ du Duc, en s’écriant : ‘ Ah ! mon cher mari ! ’ —

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 p. 289, &c.

the frightful precipitation with which the body is consigned to its kindred dust, must so frequently make over the completion of the unfinished work to the quick-lime with which the grave is supplied). The doctor had been much struck with it, and he now positively forbade the customary mode of proceeding in cases of death, — directing that Sir Arthur should be treated as if in a trance, kept in a warm bed, and diligently and unremittingly watched, until some unquestionable indication of mortality should manifest itself.

For some little time poor Augustus laid the soothing unction of this hope to his heart, and was supported by it in the doubly distressing task of assuming an air of cheerfulness in the presence of his wife, whose critical state made it very important to conceal the circumstance from her.

So many days, however, elapsed without producing any symptom of returning

animation in the supposed corpse, that Augustus lost all heart, and finding Julia considerably better, he determined upon breaking so much of the fatal occurrence, as should impress her with the belief of her father's being in a trance.— As she recovered from the immediate effects of the painful communication, she became extremely urgent to see her father. He resisted her solicitations for some time, till he thought her sufficiently prepared for the alarming spectacle. But no sooner did her eye fall upon it than she vehemently shrieked —

“ Oh ! he is gone ! — oh my father ! my dearest father ! ” — a passion of tears choaked her utterance as she flung herself upon the bed.

The fears of Augustus were too much in unison with hers, to attempt checking the salutary flow. Her thoughts, which were never long confined to selfish feelings, now reverted to her friend ; and as she recovered the power of speech, she ejaculated, “ Poor, poor Adelaide ! this

only was wanting to give her the death-blow!"

A frantic scream of ecstasy burst from Augustus —

"By Heaven he lives! — God be thanked! — O God, I thank thee! we are not wholly bereaved!" — and he fell upon his knees in grateful agony.

A slight convulsive motion in the features of Sir Arthur had been excited by Julia's mention of Adelaide. In an instant all was hurry and confusion, — Pierre, Madeleine, Wilson, Matthew, on hearing the scream, tumultuously rushed back into the room, which had been vacated when Julia entered it. — The doctor, it happened, was at hand, to restore order and enjoin tranquillity — "The spell is broken," he said; "a powerful mental stimulant was requisite to restore the nerves to action. — Nature will, I trust, now gradually assist herself, but she must have perfect quiet given her! Let all but Mr. and Mrs. Stanmore re-

ture!—and do you,” whispering to Augustus, “pursue the subject which has thus fortunately roused him.”

The import of Adelaide’s letter naturally offered the topic of discussion, accompanied by so plentiful an effusion of tears in them both as ere long produced the desired effect :—salutary drops once more gathered in those eyes so lately believed to have been closed for ever, and the consequence was a speedy restoration to the unhappy man of the full powers of his miserable existence.

In the same packet with the letter to Julia, was also one for Sir Arthur, which had been mentioned with a view of rousing his feelings, and which now, however, they would gladly have withheld, till he should have been better fitted to bear its harrowing contents. But it could not be done :—the impatient irritation with which he contended for it, was as detrimental to him, in his present state, as any excess of emotion it

might occasion, could be ; — they were obliged to give way, and put the following letter into his hands.

‘ Yet this one sacrifice* more, I am
‘ compelled to make ! — to part with
‘ those dear testimonies of affection once
‘ so passionately coveted, — since so
‘ deeply deplored, — now parted from
‘ with anguish indescribable ! — and then,
‘ oh ! then ! — can I hope to be as I am
‘ promised, — at *peace* ? — Alas ! not on
‘ this side the grave can I find it ! — But
‘ in this awful moment of impending
‘ fate, — when a few short hours will
‘ separate me from all my soul idolises,
‘ as though that grave were already
‘ closed over me, shall I not be forgiven
‘ one momentary indulgence ? — one
‘ fond, — one last adieu ? — And must I be
‘ indeed shut out from ever more behold-
‘ ing the dear object of a love so pure ?

* The return of his letters enjoined by her spiritual director.

‘ — has death a pang bitter as that
‘ thought? — Oh, that it were but death I
‘ had to meet ! — but I’m condemned to
‘ live, — and live without thee ! — live,
‘ to wean, if possible, my heart from that
‘ cherished image, which alone has filled
‘ it from the first hour we met — which
‘ gave its sole value to existence ! — Oh
‘ never ! — never ! —

‘ Impious girl ! — how dare I thus
‘ resist the only expiation I can make ?
‘ — Forgive me, Heaven ! — and grant me
‘ strength to fulfil the vow which alone
‘ could give *her* injured spirit rest ! — Not
‘ till I had abjured every species of in-
‘ tercourse with him I had so cruelly
‘ estranged from his heart’s best duties,
‘ did the appalling vision cease to haunt
‘ my sad couch, — not till then did
‘ she cease nightly to reproach me with
‘ the foul ingratitude of purloining those
‘ inestimable affections, that constituted
‘ her all of earthly happiness, — when
‘ robbed of which, — she died. . . Oh,

' that I may but sink under the sense of
 ' my privation, as she has done, and be
 ' at rest ! — To this hope I cling — in this
 ' hope, I embrace the asylum which
 ' could alone secure my stedfast adher-
 ' ence to the sacred promise she had
 ' exacted. And am I then so infirm of
 ' purpose, — so impenetrable to remorse,
 ' as to need this terrific incitement ? — Do
 ' I not feel to my inmost soul the deep,
 ' — the lasting contrition, that must em-
 ' bitter every moment of my future days,
 ' imposing this life of penitence as the
 ' only atonement I have to offer ? — Oh,
 ' I do ! — believe me, I do ! — think not
 ' so meanly of me as to doubt it ! — Yet
 ' might the weakness of a moment have
 ' betrayed me into irresolutions now
 ' effectually guarded against. I have
 ' made assurance double sure, — at what
 ' a price, that Heaven to which I now
 ' exclusively belong, only knows ! —

' But how am I wandering from my
 ' purpose ! It was not to excite your

‘ pity, but to soothe your grief I had
‘ designed — O, you ! whom my soul
‘ worships ! — You ! for whose dear sake
‘ alone I wished to live ! — for whose hap-
‘ piness I would thankfully resign my
‘ breath, although it be now my hard lot
‘ to prove its bane — let me conjure you
‘ to — I cannot say *forget*, — oh ! no !
‘ not to *forget* ! — *that* would inflict a
‘ pang to drive away my poor remains
‘ of sense ! — but let your tears embalm
‘ my memory and cherish it as that of a
‘ departed friend ! — And when Heaven,
‘ in mercy, shall release me from this
‘ living death, — if I must relinquish
‘ the fond day-dream of my imagination,
‘ — that the disembodied spirit could
‘ be allowed to hover round in watchful
‘ care of its earthly treasure, — may I
‘ not at least dare to look with some con-
‘ fidence to the hope, that penitence so
‘ deep, and sacrifice so severe, may
‘ finally appease *her* wrath, and the
‘ beatified spirit seal my forgiveness, by

‘ admitting me to a re-union with her,
‘ in those blessed regions of universal
‘ love, where all invidious distinctions
‘ are obliterated, — and we may together
‘ await the full completion of felicity,
‘ when your immortal part may also be
‘ liberated from its terrestrial bondage,
‘ and permitted to ascend to joy ineffable
‘ for evermore! —

‘ And is it I? — wretched! miser-
‘ able I! — who presume to aspire to
‘ hopes like these?—whilst the approach-
‘ ing hour is pressing forward in such
‘ fearful contrast—My head turns giddy
‘ with the contemplation, — I must break
‘ off. —

‘ Now, then, a long — my hand refuses
‘ to trace the cruel word. — Oh, will
‘ not one scalding drop flow forth from
‘ these parched eyes, to relieve my
‘ burning brain? — I cannot weep! a
‘ film obscures my sight, — my heart
‘ sickens! — the pen ——’

The pen had, in fact, dropt from her

fingers, and she was found by Madeleine in a state of total insensibility : — a lamentable preparation for the awful trial so immediately impending !

She had, before attempting this letter, endeavoured to detach her thoughts from all farther connexion with wordly affairs, by a sort of testamentary paper, which was also contained in the packet ; allotting, — after some friendly bequests, and an ample provision for Pierre and Madeleine, — her fortune to be equally divided between Madame de Montménil, little Harry, (in grateful requital of Jane Cosby's friendship,) and the endowment of the convent. She had also written a valedictory, full of gratitude, to Jane and Dr. Cosby. All these, together with Sir Arthur's letters, which she had meant to enclose, the Abbess found scattered about the cell, when summoned by Madeleine to the succour of her mistress ; and having carefully collected and sealed them up, only delayed forward-

ing the packet until the irrevocable vows should actually have been pronounced.

Such a heart-rending letter was but little calculated to produce on Sir Arthur its intended soothing effect; on the contrary, in his present shattered state of nerves it aggravated his distress to the very verge of unsettling his reason. He peremptorily insisted upon learning from Madeleine the minutest circumstances relating to the fatal ceremony*, and his unhappy ward's every look and action.

— Madeleine bore testimony to the undeviating firmness, with which she had supported herself through the tremendous scene, — an enthusiastic spirit of martyrdom seemed to have taken possession of her within the last few hours and to bear her through it. — For one moment only, had she transgressed against the forms

* A ceremony so frequently and well described, both by travellers and novellists, as to leave no fair excuse for harassing the feelings of the reader, by its repetition here.

prescribed to her. — When covered with the shroud, and the funeral service reading over her, she had fervently and audibly ejaculated, “ Oh that this were not a mere symbol ! ” — What had afterwards occurred Madeleine could not tell, not having been admitted to her Lady.

The sensations of Sir Arthur, during this excruciating recital, beggar all description ; and when in some degree recovered from their poignancy, he gave himself up to the most melancholy state of despondence.

It has scarcely been with justice to him that, in our unwillingness to interrupt the story of Adelaide’s sufferings, we have so silently passed over the conflicts to which he had on his part also been a prey. Not, indeed, to the degree of severe intensity which characterised those of his erring ward, — for the keenness of his remorse had been somewhat blunted by the conciliatory language, forgiveness, and strongly ex-

pressed solicitude of his beatified wife, in her last moments, for his union with the object of his passion ; but never had he deceived himself into the expectation of any thing like happiness resulting from the possession of his dearest wishes, — *so obtained*. The consciousness of being his wife's destroyer must still cling to him, and poison every joy. But then might he not *confer* the bliss he could not *feel*? — This was a thought to urge him on. Could Adelaide once be brought to admit the conviction of Lady Delmaine's pardon, and of her dying wishes, — what was there to prevent *her*, at least, from enjoying unalloyed felicity? — *She* had no cause for heart-corroding remorse! — It was not *her* attachment to him, but *his* unconquerable love for her had done the mischief. Full well he knew her every idea of earthly happiness was centred in him ; — and, even putting his own uncontrollable feelings, of whatever description, out of the ques-

tion, — he was yet bound by all the ties of honour and gratitude, to devote his existence to the study of promoting in her bosom that peace to which his own must ever be a stranger.

Thus did the arch-deluder, — Passion, — veil over, in Sir Arthur's thoughts, with a colour of disinterestedness, the pursuit of its own gratification, and reconcile the contradictory sentiments by which he was incessantly torn and tortured, until the flattering prospect of his ward's recovery, of late held out to him, had, by degrees, acquired exclusive possession of his thoughts, and made him feel his very life to hang upon these prospects being realized. Heavily, therefore, fell the blow, and long and sad were its consequences. He secluded himself wholly from the society of his children ; and, during some miserable months, they nearly despaired of his ever being himself again.

The first event which in any degree

revived his interest in worldly affairs, was the death of the old incumbent of the living of Hawkwood. It was in his own gift, and the rectory immediately adjoining his grounds. This brought to his recollection the excellent man at Clifton, from whose judicious exhortations he had derived great benefit. The living was valuable, and he forthwith tendered it to his acceptance ; adding, at the same time, how much he stood in need of the consolation his society would afford him. This last consideration determined the worthy pastor to accede to the exchange ; which he would otherwise have been induced, by his attachment to his present flock, to decline : — but the interest Sir Arthur had excited in him was of no ordinary kind.

Another circumstance now also occurred to arouse him a little farther. By some peculiarity in the will of Augustus Stanmore's uncle, it was important that his first child should be born in

England ; and it became necessary, for securing the safety of Julia in crossing the sea, that they should speedily set out. Sir Arthur, although anxiously urgent they should do so, was still deaf to their persuasions to accompany them, — clinging to the spot where his lost treasure continued to exist, though no longer for him, — until the breaking out anew of hostilities, and the seizure of the English in France, decided the expediency of adopting a different plan, and taking shipping at Leghorn. The doubled hazards of a long sea voyage in time of war, increasing his alarm for his daughter's safety, now determined him to take a share in her fate, whatever it might prove.

Julia had made various ineffectual attempts to gain access to her cloistered friend. — She could only obtain admittance to the Abbess, who met her entreaties with arguments so plausible, against whatever had a tendency to draw

the penitent's thoughts back into the world she had renounced, and dwelt with so much satisfaction on the visibly beneficial effects of her new mode of life and increasing devotion, that Julia had been constrained to submit, and even to allow the reasonableness of the objection.— All Sir Arthur's intercessions for admission were firmly resisted by Adelaide herself.

Prior to their departure, however, Julia preferred her request for one parting interview, with such pathetic earnestness of entreaty as proved irresistible.— It was granted. But much did the good Abbess afterwards regret her compliance, when she perceived the sudden check that was given to the favourable symptoms of gradually returning calmness, and of increasing fervour in exercises of piety, she had with tender solicitude latterly discerned in Adelaide. A sincere affection for the young nun herself had taken its place among the feelings by which the superior was ac-

tuated in their earlier intercourse ; she now participated as an anxious friend in the benefit which her unhappy charge derived from the counsels of the present spiritual director of the sisterhood, the very opposite to him who had occupied that station in the days of Adelaide's childhood. Rational and learned, — Yes ! reader, believe me or not ! there are such beings as *rational* Roman Catholics ! — he had been powerfully attracted by his new penitent's character and misfortunes, and applied himself, zealously and judiciously, to turn her enthusiastic disposition into the channel in which the perturbations of her spirit could alone find repose. Some improvement had already manifested itself in the more earnest attention she paid to the subjects in which he was endeavouring to engage her thoughts, when the parting visit of Julia overset the fair promise for a considerable length of time, dissipating the small

measure of calmness that had been obtained.

Julia, however averse from imparting painful intelligence, was by the simplicity of her character eminently disqualified for varnishing over the truth when particularly questioned. Adelaide eagerly and minutely enquired, and Julia told, every distressing circumstance that had occurred. Such a passion of distracted grief followed the acknowledgment of her guardian's dangerous seizure as quickly brought the Abbess to the *parloir*, who authoritatively interrupted all further communication, except so far as was necessary to tranquillise the wretched self-accuser as to Sir Arthur's actual state, by the assurance of his restoration to health, and his purpose to accompany his daughter to England.

The final separation was agonising to both. But Julia was soon restored to happier feelings, whilst the poor recluse

was again a prey to renewed misery, dreadfully aggravated by the knowledge of her having so nearly proved the destroyer of the husband also. Long indeed was it now ere any appearance of amendment again rewarded the unremitting assiduity of her spiritual guides.

Meanwhile the day came that had been fixed for the departure of the travellers. It was with a pang similar to that which dislodges the spirit from its earthly tenement in violent death, that Sir Arthur tore himself from the spot where Adelaide existed — where he could wander and linger for hours around the walls that enclosed her, and feel it a remaining link still to breathe the same air with her. Augustus and Julia were greatly alarmed with the struggles they beheld ; but which somewhat subsided as the Italian shores receded from view.

The voyage was prosperous; and although reasonable fears continued to be entertained for the effects of the afflicting recollections which must be awakened by the arrival at home, that was not productive of any seriously-alarming result. The first sight of Mr. Morecroft's benign countenance, and Charlotte's animated demonstrations of joy, (both standing in the porch awaiting his arrival,) had immediately dispelled a portion of the gloom which for the last few miles was observed deepening on Sir Arthur's features. And many days did not go by ere it became evident that he was recovering a degree of interest in what passed around him, that gave every thing to hope from time, — though it must be acknowledged time found an able assistant in Mr. Morecroft. He supplied his patron with weapons of greater efficiency for combating his errors, than he had been in the habit of wielding. No man possessed more cheerful good sense, or could be less

dogmatical than this excellent minister, who assiduously applied himself to clearing up the mist of passion which had so long clouded his reason. And Sir Arthur was finally willing to confess, that the consciousness of being his wife's destroyer must not only have been the insurmountable bar he felt it, to all enjoyment of happiness, but in itself a *moral preclusion* of the possibility of acting in conformity to Lady Delmaine's generous intentions, by uniting himself to the object of his affection. He hence became, in some measure, reconciled to the step Adelaide had taken. She had, perhaps, done what was best both for herself and him. Could he now but be sure that peace was the result to her, he should submit with calmness to his own lot.

From this time he began to recover to a sense of his remaining domestic comforts. The smile might again be occasionally seen to play over his lip at a lively sally of Charlotte's ; — the tear of

pleasure seen glistening in his eye, when, being attracted into the nursery by the sound of the crowing infant, he has found Julia in the very height of connubial felicity with his little grandson at her breast, while the enraptured husband was hanging delighted over wife and babe ; — and that the interest of friendly feelings could again be awakened in his heart, was evinced in his solicitude to cultivate the daily intercourse with Mr. Morecroft. By slow degrees, his books and agricultural pursuits resumed their place among his daily avocations, and notwithstanding that many an hour of melancholy retrospection and bitter regret still invaded his privacy, he ceased to be a very unhappy man.

And Adelaide ? —

Alas ! poor Adelaide ! — more dilatory by far was her progress towards any thing like tranquillity ! — Years of sorrow, penitence and prayer, passed over her head without producing much sensible

effect. — Her grief lay deeper than any consolation that had yet reached her : — until at length aroused from the mental lethargy that was stealing over her, by the dangerous illness of the Lady Abbess, which made her sensible of having still something to lose.

This kind woman had been uniformly affectionate in her attentions to Adelaide; who had received them, as we are apt to do the daily blessings of Providence — unthankful mortals that we are! — without reflexion, — as mere matters of course, — till privation shows us their value. She now became aware of their importance to her small remaining stock of comfort. She felt herself clinging to the Abbess, as all she had left, — and set about attending her sick couch with anxious and indefatigable watchfulness.

Believing herself on her death-bed, this zealous friend made a last attempt to urge anew what she had often ineffectually endeavoured before, — the

reality of Lady Delmaine's forgiveness. — The solemnity of the moment gave it effect ! — Adelaide was convinced ; — and, finally relieved from this corroding anguish, the desolate heart of the sincere penitent once more admitted a gleam of unmixed satisfaction, in the prospect of her patient's recovery which soon rewarded her cares. The spark of feeling, thus again rekindled in her bosom, now opened it also to a gratifying sense of the high estimation in which she was herself held by the whole community, every individual of it seeming eager to seize opportunities of testifying the tender interest she inspired.

The consciousness of being beloved will assuage many a heavy grief, — and Adelaide was not insensible to its soothing influence.

IN the year 1815, when the restoration of the Bourbons again laid open to English travellers the access to milder winter climes, Augustus and Julia (not seized with the locomotive epidemic which spread so rapidly throughout the nation, but,) impelled by Dr. Cosby's opinion of the delicate state of their eldest boy's health, determined to secure him against our variable temperature by removing with him to a more southern latitude. The affectionate heart of Julia instantly suggested Florence:—but not being able at that time to venture upon so long a journey with safety herself, Charlotte eagerly proposed taking her place, —as well from zeal to attend upon the young Arthur, who was her favourite nephew, as from the fervent wish of again seeing Adelaide, and atoning for her former injustice, as far as it was in her power, by a frank acknowledgement and suing for pardon. It ought sooner to have been said,

though, perhaps, it may have been presumed, that matured understanding and well-grounded principle had smoothed down the early asperities, and made a very different person, of Charlotte, from what she was becoming under the tutelage of Lady Barbara Strickland. — In addition to this happy ground-work, she possessed a cultivated mind and temperate wit, which, (like that of Lord Lyttelton's Lucy,)

‘ ————— with inoffensive light
 ‘ All pleasing shone, ’—

and gained her the unqualified admiration of whoever approached her. Augustus was to take charge of conveying Charlotte and his boy to Florence, and, having seen them respectably placed there, to return to attend upon his wife's critical hour, and accompany her and her nursling to join them, when sufficiently recovered.

The journey was accomplished to their wish. On their arrival Augustus forth-

with proceeded to pay his respects to the Lady Abbess, and enquire when Charlotte might be admitted to an interview with Sister Adelaide at the grate. — But what was his surprise, on being ushered into the presence of the Abbess, in the Superior herself to recognise Adelaide!—

On the death of her predecessor, not many months before, the sisterhood had been unanimous in the choice of her to succeed to the important charge ; and the occupation this afforded, confirmed the tranquillity of her mind to a greater degree than she had ever expected again to enjoy.

Charlotte flew eagerly to the interview ; — but much indeed was she affected with the change of appearance, so manifestly showing that the canker had eaten into the heart ; — her faded, resigned, though still eminently lovely countenance, — her attenuated frame, — too plainly indicating that her release

from earthly cares could not be very remote. Scarcely was it possible to trace in the placid dignified demeanour of the person now before her, the beautifully animated creature, whose ever-varying charm of expression attracted and captivated every beholder.

Throwing herself into the arms that were affectionately opened to receive her, Charlotte said, "How ardently have I longed for the opportunity of making the only reparation in my power for my former injustice to you, dear Adelaide, by frankly confessing it, and sincerely asking your pardon!"

"You owe me no reparation, dear Charlotte: — you knew me better than I did myself, when you saw in me the bane of your family's happiness."

"But so unconsciously on your part! — and with a purity of intention that must have been so obvious to every unbiassed person, that I know not how to forgive

myself for the injurious doubts I harboured."

"Purity of intention was, indeed, the delusive plea by which I long blinded myself; — but from the hour in which your sainted mother told me I was in danger of alienating from her what she most prized on earth, I became inexcusable in persevering. — Her magnanimous forgiveness but marks my fault more strongly."

"Yet, surely, that full forgiveness should speak peace to your soul!" — replied Charlotte, gratified to find, in her having at length given credit to this consoling idea, the proof of her mind's restoration to perfect sanity.

"Since I have been able to cherish this blessed conviction, it has indeed removed one heavy load; — but not all the years of penitence, that have passed in miserable succession over my head, have yet had power to relieve me from the sense of guilt that embitters my life ;

— not even the expiatory sacrifice: I have finally in mercy been endued with strength to offer up at the foot of the cross, of that unhallowed passion which has produced such direful mischief, — can allay those heart-corroding feelings.”

“ Indeed you tax yourself too severely! — My ill-judging aunt bore so great a share in deepening the wounds of my dear mother’s mind——”

“ Kind Charlotte! you seek to soothe, but nothing can extenuate my error! — and my best comfort is to feel that the close of all cannot be far distant — encouraged as I now am to look with confidence to the mercy in a future state, I have so ill deserved!” — She raised her eyes to heaven as she spoke this. A glow of religious fervour, irradiating her fine features, imparted something unearthly to her whole appearance, that deeply moved Charlotte; — and, with increased solicitude, she continued to combat the severity of Adelaide’s self-accusation; but, —

“No! Charlotte, no!” she said, “the dread responsibility rests wholly on myself. — I have had mournful leisure for dispassionate reflection, and am the more intimately and indelibly impressed with the conviction, that, under no circumstances, can the indulging a sentiment like mine admit of palliation. — Oh! that my example could become a warning to the inexperienced! — I should not then have lived in vain!” —

The belief, that such a warning might not be wholly useless, has induced the writer of these pages to the attempt of recording Adelaide's story.

With humble diffidence of her powers to give it effect has she undertaken the task; and should this feeble effort only obtain sufficient notice to lead some able pen into taking up the same cause, she will find a gratification even in thus being the indirect means of placing, in its

fullest light, the important and incontrovertible moral axiom, —

That NO INNOCENCY OF HEART, OR PURITY OF INTENTION, CAN WARRANT THE FOSTERING A PASSION FOR A FORBIDDEN OBJECT, — OR AVERT THE INCALCULABLE MISCHIEF WHICH MUST NECESSARILY, IN ONE SHAPE OR ANOTHER, BE THE CONSEQUENCE.

THE END.

LONDON :
Printed by A. & R. Spottiswoode,
New-Street-Square.

